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“A Short History of the Athlone Fellowship”

by R. L. Bob Hemmings

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A Short History of The Athlone Fellowship

**One of the Finest Examples of UK-Canada Cooperation
in Engineering Education**

By

R. L. Bob Hemmings

A 1962 Athlone Fellow

From the University of Alberta

Revised June 26, 2020

A Short History of the Athlone Fellowship

This is not a formal history of the Athlone Fellowship, but a work of reflection, collection, and memory recovery. Names, characters, organizations, places, events, and incidents are either extracts of public documents, information gleaned from hours of internet research, and recovery of memories some of which date back over 55 years. These memories may have been distorted with the passing of time, but reflect the author's concepts of the occurrences depicted. The work uses information from many sources, including letters of some Athlone Fellows, of the current year or two, as well as those that were included in the available Athlone Fellowship Newsletters.

The work is in four parts:

- Part 1 A Short History of the Athlone Fellowship**
- Part 2 Letters from Athlone Fellows**
- Part 3 Extracts from the Athlone Newsletters**
- Part 4 My Athlone Memories**

This work is mainly for my wife, my children, and my grandchildren, and for many interested Athlone Fellows.

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A Short History of the Athlone Fellowship

One of the Finest Examples of UK-Canada Cooperation in Engineering Education



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Athlone Fellow IC 1962

BSc. Chemical Engineering, University of Alberta, 1962

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Forward

I began this work as I noticed that I was growing older, and had not yet told my children, let alone my grandchildren, why, where and how I had earned my advanced degree. When I recently mentioned the **Athlone Fellowship Program**, even to educators, I was greeted by a blank look, as if I was speaking in a foreign language. So I decided to undertake a search for some documentation of the **Program**. That was when I discovered that there was little documentation easily available. So, I tried to use whatever resources I could find to compile this **Short History of the Athlone Fellowship**.

And, what was the Athlone Fellowship Program? It was a unique honour and opportunity for recognition of significant Engineering talent, designed for Canadian graduate engineers to take either 1 or 2 years to gain British engineering experience, either academic or industrial. It was thought that, when the Athlone Fellows returned to Canada, such experience would eventually lead to sales of British engineering products and services and thus increase British trade with Canada, to the benefit of both countries. The program began in 1951 and continued for 20 years, to the direct benefit of 810 Canadian engineering graduates.

By chance, one of my close friends is also an Imperial College (IC) Athlone Fellow, Ron Weir (UNB Athlone at IC 1963), passed my name on to Gary Elfstrom (UBC Athlone at IC 1968) who was organizing the **2017 Summer "Athlones at IC" Conference**. After sharing much information, he also passed on my need for Athlone information to those Athlones that he knew. Many other Athlone Fellows, and some of their friends, passed on information to me, including: Dwight Aplevich, Jack Banks, Tom Carter, Peter Castle, Murray Clamen, George Davies, Neville Davis, Bill DeCoursey, Robert Frederking, Ken Johns, Neil MacKenzie, Ken Montgomery, Fred Parkinson, Arthur Plumpton, Ian

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Rowe, John Sankey, Brian Staples, David Stone, Eric Thomson, and more as the Project expanded.

And my wife Micheline gave me her encouragement and enthusiasm when I got stuck.

Armed with this support, I began serious organization of the information that has been shared with me. This document is one of the results.

Other documents that I have developed (or in some cases, still am developing) include:

- *Letters by Athlone Fellows* containing:
 - 13 letters dated in 2018, as a result of my request;
 - an article entitled "*Jolly Good Fellows*", featuring comments by 7 Athlone Fellows in the Imperial College Newsletter of Spring 2018, pages 20-23, compiled by William Ham Bevin;
 - 2 letters from the Imperial College Newsletter of Winter 2016-2017, page 3; and
 - 35 letters that were published in the Athlone Fellowship Newsletters, #6 to #16 (1962-1972).
- *My own Athlone Story*, hopefully to be finished this year (2018)
- *Selected Extracts from the Athlone Fellowship Newsletters*, from #6 to #16.

And, as a result of perusing all the available information, I have come to more fully appreciate, and to have pride, too, in being a part of the **Athlone Fellowship Program**.

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Introduction

The Athlone Fellowship Program came into being in 1951, and continued for 20 years until it was terminated in 1970. It was, apparently, initially identified as the *Athlone Fellowship Scheme*, but I find that the word “scheme” has some negative connotations, so I use the word *Program* instead. And I also use, inconsistently, the North American spelling where I am not repeating input from UK sources.

During those 20 years the total number of Fellowships awarded was 810 and the following table shows the relative distribution of Fellowships since 1951:

Year	2 yrs industry or industrial consultants	2 yrs university college or research lab	Mixed Course	1 yr only *=university **=industry	Total
1951	8	21	8	1*	38
1952	4	17	13	1*	35
1953	16	10	10	1*	37
1954	10	9	15	2(1*,1**)	36
1955	7	11	17	2 (1*,1**)	37
1956	1	19	16	2*	38
1957	2	27	7	-	36
1958	-	20	17	1**	38
1959	-	27	14	-	41
1960	1	27	12	-	40
1961	1	29	10	-	40
1962	-	21	18	1*	40
1963	2	25	14	1*	42
1964	1	23	13	5*	42
1965	-	22	13	9 (8*,1**)	44
1966	1	25	12	6*	44
1967	-	26	10	9 (8*, 1**)	45
1968	-	26	7	10 (9*, 1**)	43
1969	1	24	10	12 (11*, 1**)	47
1970	1	19	9	18 (17*, 1**)	47
Totals	56	428	245	81	810

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The Origin of the Athlone Fellowships Program

It has been stated in the brief note on Governors General of Canada, in the on-line Canadian Encyclopedia, that “The Earl of Athlone created the Athlone-Vanier Engineering Fellowship at the Engineering Institute of Canada, recognizing academic excellence, leadership and management potential.” But more evidence of that activity is difficult to find, as is how it became the “Athlone-Vanier” rather than the “Athlone” Fellowship.

I have also discovered the following information on the origin of the Athlone Fellowships, extracted from Grace’s Guide to British Industrial History, which is an brief Obituary of Lord Athlone. [Grace’s Guide is the leading source of historical information on industry and manufacturing in Britain. This web publication contains 127,453 pages of information and 201,038 images on early companies, their products and the people who designed and built them.]

The Earl of Athlone Obituary

Major-General Alexander Augustus Frederick William Alfred George Cambridge (1874–1957)–1957

The Right Hon. the Earl of Athlone, K.G., P.C., G.C.B., G.M.M.G., G.C.V.O., D.S.O., F.R.S., who died in London on 16th January 1957, was elected an Honorary Member of the Institution in 1936.

The Earl was born at Kensington Palace on 14th April 1874, the third son of the late Duke of Teck and the late Princess Mary Adelaide.

He had been Personal A.D.C. to H.M. the Queen since 1953, and before that to the late King George VI. He was an Honorary Major-General, retired, and a late Captain Seventh Hussars and Royal Horse Guards, and Second Life Guards. He served in Matabeleland 1896, in South Africa 1899–1900, and in the 1914–18 war. From 1923 to 1931 he was Governor-General of the Union of South Africa.

During the 1939–45 war the Earl of Athlone became Governor-General of the Dominion of Canada. During his term of office from 1940 to 1946 he and the Countess were extremely popular in Canada. **When the scheme for giving Canadian engineering graduates post-graduate training in Britain (which was later to become known as the Athlone Fellowship Scheme) was inaugurated, just after the conclusion of the war, it was decided in view of his strong link with Canada to invite the Earl of Athlone to become patron of the Scheme. He agreed most readily to have his name associated with it.**

The Earl showed the greatest interest in the Athlone Fellowship Scheme from its inception and he attended some of the receptions given for the Fellows.

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During my own Athlone Fellowship interview, way back in 1962, I was told, if my memory is still working OK, that the main purpose of the Athlone Fellowship Program was to expose promising engineers from Canada to the British engineering and manufacturing industries. The idea was that, through this exposure, the Canadian engineers would specify British engineering products and thus expand British engineering industrial products and, further, increase British exports. This memory fragment is supported by the preamble of the British Board of Trade booklet on the Athlone Fellowship, detailed later in this work, in the Section entitled “**The Athlone Program Description**”.

There was an article on the formation of the **Athlone Fellowship Program** presented in 1953 by Dr. W. Abbott, C.M.G., O.B.E., Ph.D., B.Sc.(Eng.), M.I.Mech.E., at a joint meeting of The Institution of Civil Engineers, The Institution of Mechanical Engineers and The Institution of Electrical Engineers on the 10th April, 1953.

The paper was published in the Proceedings I.E.E. (1953, 100, Part I, p. 221); and both the paper and the discussion, in the Proceedings of Mech.E. (A, 1953, 167, No. 3). It is reported that in introducing the author, the President of the meeting said that it was difficult to determine exactly where the Athlone Fellowship Scheme had originated, but it had been very much associated with governmental visits between Canada and the United Kingdom, perhaps more concerned with economic affairs originally and spreading later into the educational field. As a result the Government had commissioned Sir Arthur Fleming, a Past-President of The Institution, and Dr. Abbott to go to Canada and report upon how arrangements could be made for the post-graduate training of Canadians in the UK.

The next step had been that a number of Canadian professors had visited UK universities and examined their training schemes, and had then reported favourably on the planned Athlone scheme. Thus it came about that in 1951 the Athlone Fellowship Scheme had been established, and in that year 38 Canadian graduates had come to the UK for a two-year course of post-graduate training. The same number had been sent over in 1952 and this year (1953), so that there were always close to 76 Fellows in this country at a time.

The scheme could not have been in better hands than in those of Dr. Abbott, who had played such an important part in its establishment. Dr. Abbott had graduated at London University, and had secured his practical training at H.M. Dockyard, Portsmouth; after that he had been in educational circles at the Admiralty; he had been at the Northampton Polytechnic as Head of the Civil and

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Mechanical Engineering Department; and he was now in an important position in the Ministry of Education.

The paper was entitled "*The Athlone Fellowship Scheme for the Practical Training in Industry of Canadian Engineering Graduates in Great Britain*", and was summarized as presented below, with a few minor rewording to make it more easily understood from the Canadian perspective, and from a time some 65 years since the inception of the Athlone Fellowship:

Briefly stated, the scheme is designed to bring to Great Britain every year 38 Canadian engineering graduates for post-graduate study extending over two years. This is the third year of operation of the scheme, two groups of Athlone Fellows being now in Great Britain. The scheme carries the name of a former Governor-General of Canada, the Earl of Athlone. It is well known that, although considerable numbers of engineering graduates have come for further training to the United Kingdom from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, relatively few have come from Canada. Canadian graduates have near at hand the educational and training resources of the United States, and it has been suggested that Canadian engineers are becoming increasingly familiar with the products and resources of American organizations, and less knowledgeable of those of corresponding firms in the United Kingdom. The matter was carefully considered by the Board of Trade and the Commonwealth Relations Office, and as a result Sir Arthur Fleming and Dr. Abbott visited Canada in the spring of 1949. An embryo scholarship scheme was discussed with Ministers, Government officers, leaders in industry and commerce, professional engineers, university representatives and officials of trade organizations.

Following a visit of Canadian professors to this country the Athlone Fellowship scheme was announced concurrently in Canada and the United Kingdom. It was decided that there should be two classes of award:

***Group A**, for those about to graduate, the awards being allocated on a quota basis, the distribution being based primarily on the relative numbers graduating annually in the various universities, other factors also being given some weight;*

***Group B**, for those who had already graduated and were at work, the awards being made on a national basis.*

The Fellowships cover: (a) the total cost of travel, (b) a subsistence allowance of £6 10s. a week net (the initial amount, which had been

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increased several times since the paper was presented), (c) the cost of tuition at a university, (d) an allowance towards textbooks and (e) a travel grant of £25 per annum for journeys within the United Kingdom. Industrial employers are asked to pay into a central fund the wages they would normally pay to a trainee of the college apprentice type. The net cost of the scheme is carried by the British Government.

Many factors had a bearing on the scheme, one being that only a minority of candidates have wished to enter industry, the majority preferring to continue their studies in a university with a view to securing a higher degree. This is because North America is "higher-degree conscious" to a much greater extent than is Great Britain, and the scholarship holder in Canada is tempted to use his award for the purpose of obtaining a qualification with a definite market value.

The scheme fits most suitably the requirements of the graduate in mechanical, electrical or chemical engineering; it is necessary to ensure the utmost flexibility in the administration of the scheme and to avoid over-emphasizing the value of practical work in those engineering spheres, such as forestry engineering and irrigation, which are not practiced to any extent in this country.

Probably the most important single factor operating against the success of the scheme is the intense demand for graduates from all branches of the engineering industry, not only in Canada but also in the United States. It is probable that the great bulk of the graduates with a practical bent do not apply for Fellowships but seize the opportunities now presented by the buoyant industrial conditions in Canada; and that those who do apply include many whose aim is research, for which a higher degree is a necessity.

In reply to the discussion which followed the presentation of the paper, Dr. Abbott said that he wished to make it clear that those who selected the Athlone Fellows were looking for the complete man, and not necessarily the best graduate on his academic record. They stated that they "*did not want to miss any Churchills*".

What was it that the young engineer required after getting his degree? What material would he most commonly use? He suggested human material; and, therefore, what the young engineer wanted more than anything else was industrial experience and contact with human beings. Although they had accepted most willingly—and would certainly continue to do so—men who wanted to pursue research, they nevertheless also wanted to take the practically-

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minded engineer who required works training, contact with human beings, and the production side of engineering.

The question had been asked whether they were enlisting the aid of Canadian industry. The answer was very definitely, Yes. Every year Mr. James Duncan, who was the President of Massey-Harris, wrote to all the leading Canadian companies asking for their co-operation; he did this at the suggestion of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Ottawa, and his letters had a profound effect. Many firms were co-operating by releasing some of their staff members to come to this country as Group B candidates for post-graduate training. But the difficulty had arisen that many of these companies would agree only with great reluctance to lend a man for two years. He remembered discussing this matter with Mr. Ingledow, of B.C. Electric, who had said, "I want some of my young men to come to the United Kingdom some time with firm X and firm Y because experience with them would be very much to our advantage. We are already buying a good deal of material from these companies and would wish to buy more; but we cannot spare any of our men for more than one year."

With regard to competition for places he could give the figures, but they would be very misleading, because the universities screened the candidates whom the selectors saw. In fact, in one university with a very masterful president, the selectors interviewed only a small number of the applicants; the remainder had been told that they had no chance. But of those who were seen, there were, on the average, two candidates for every Fellowship in Canada as a whole, and that was quite healthy. There had been a definite trend on the part of candidates this year to opt for industrial training. It had been asked how this was to be accounted for—had he, Dr. Abbott, anything to do with it? Well, he had had a little to do with it, but not a great deal. He and his colleagues discussed with the Athlone Fellow applicants on many occasions what they might do; he and his colleagues gave their point of view, and the applicants gave theirs, and they thought about it. This was done before the interview. The applicants were met informally and there were long discussions, and then when the applicants appeared before the selection boards, they had made up their minds.

Two young men had come before him and his colleagues, one aged 21 and the other 22. The first young man had been first out of 147 and the second had been fourth. Both were six-footers, and he had never seen two young men who had made such an impression on him. Both had been paying their way through the university, doing all kinds of work to get the money, and both had wanted to go to Rolls-Royce. They had said that they did not want higher degrees but wanted practical training. So he had cabled the company and they were both going there.

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He and his colleagues had had no share in influencing those two young men in their decisions.

In another case, a young man in Quebec who had failed to get a Fellowship had said, "I am terribly disappointed that I have not got a Fellowship, but I intend to come to Great Britain under my own steam; I have saved enough money, and I should like to come and get practical experience in the United Kingdom. If I come, will you place me and help me as if I were an Athlone Fellow?" He had been told that of course they would do so; but it had so happened that there was a deficiency in another university, and this excellent young man had got a Fellowship after all. But this case gave some indication of the keenness among young Canadians to take advantage of the scheme.

The question had been asked whether Canadian industry was consulted about the scheme, and he would reply emphatically, "Yes". Most of the leading figures in the Canadian engineering world had been consulted personally or informally by himself or by his colleagues, and he would like to mention the reactions of one outstanding personality in Canadian engineering life, Mr. Hertz. There had been no stronger supporter than Mr. Hertz of the Athlone Fellowship Scheme, and Mr. Hertz had expressed the following point of view, which was worth recording: he had recently visited factories in Switzerland, Sweden and this country and he had returned to Canada a little disturbed; he had said, "It seems to me that the equipment in the works of some British companies is out of date compared with what I have seen in Switzerland and Sweden and, indeed, in my own company. My own factories are more modern and better equipped than those of yours that I have seen. I am a little worried as to whether I should be doing the right thing in persuading some of my young engineers to go to the United Kingdom for training on your less up-to-date equipment." Mr. Hertz and the author had discussed this situation very thoroughly. Here had been a perfectly honest man, friendly to the scheme, disturbed in his mind as to whether he could continue to support it with a clear conscience; and it was not easy to answer the question. In this country, the UK, we were not able to replace equipment as rapidly and effectively as we would wish because of the economic situation. That was well appreciated in Canada. The point could be made, of course, that one really did not want the most up-to-date and the speediest equipment for practical training; the thing that mattered was the organization of the training scheme, and he thought he had been able to satisfy Mr. Hertz on that score. But there had been letters from Athlone Fellows in this country criticizing the equipment on which they had been put to work, some machine tools being 40 years old.

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At the Ministry they had a file of letters which were very encouraging, although perhaps not nearly as outspoken as they would like. He would end by reading an extract from a letter: "Messrs. X, as you know, arranged my two-year course, and due to its flexibility and my freedom to go wherever I desired in the works, this leaves me with nothing to criticize adversely. Indeed, they may be spoiling me. Certainly everything possible is being done for me, and if I do not take advantage of these privileges, then I have only myself to blame."

More on the Beginning of the Athlone Fellowship Program

The Athlone Newsletter #12, published in January, 1968, contains a further insight into the formation of the Athlone Fellowship Program, as well as an indication of its coming termination. The article therein is entitled "A Short History", and I quote it below in its entirety:

A Short History as told by the British Board of Trade

The Athlone Fellowships scheme resulted from a post-war review of the economic links between Canada and Britain. The idea of offering a Fellowship for technical training in Britain to young Canadian engineers was first suggested by Mr. Harold Wilson, then President of the Board of Trade, when he visited Canada in 1949. In order to examine this, a mission led by the prominent industrialist the late Sir Arthur Fleming, C.B.E., visited Canada early in 1950. The mission discussed with representatives of universities, government departments, and professional institutions throughout Canada, their reactions to the proposal for a Fellowship which would enable Canadian graduate engineers to obtain further training and experience in Britain. In the interests of the development of trade between the two countries. As a result of the findings of this mission (which was quickly followed by a return visit of Canadian university professors to Britain) the Athlone Fellowships scheme was announced in Parliament by Mr. Wilson later the same year. It was named after the Earl of Athlone, who was Governor-General of Canada from 1940–1946. The first group of Fellows arrived in the U.K. in September 1951.

The late Sir Arthur Fleming, who played a key part in the setting up of the scheme, became Chairman at the Committee which was formed to manage its affairs. He retained this position for six years and died in 1960, two years after his retirement. Sir Arthur was succeeded as Chairman of the Managing Committee by Sir Claude Gibb (1958–1959) who collapsed and died in January 1959 whilst traveling from the United States to Canada. Sir Julian Pote, who succeeded Sir Claude, was in post as Chairman from 1959 to 1966 when he retired. The present Chairman, Sir Maurice Fiennes was appointed in 1966.

When the scheme started there were eleven Canadian universities participating, but this number has now doubled. The minimum number of Fellowships awarded annually is

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now forty-one, but the actual number can exceed this if one-year Fellowships are allocated. Originally all awards were for two years, but since 1962 a limited number of one-year awards have been offered to "B" Fellows (i.e. engineers who have spent some time in industry). This came about because some firms in Canada were reluctant to let their employees go for two years—even on an Athlone Fellowship—but they were prepared to approve a one-year absence.

Selection of the candidates starts with interviews by local Boards during the last three months of each year, at each of the participating Canadian universities. These Interview Boards contain representatives or local academic and industrial institutions and of the British Government office, and are attended by the Athlone Adviser from London. The present Adviser is Mr. Fred. E. A. Manning, C.B.E., who has been in post since 1961. He was preceded by Dr. A. C. Monkhouse (1958–1961), Dr. H. H. Burness (1955–1958) and Dr. W. Abbott (1951–1955). The Boards interview only those candidates who have already been pre-selected by the universities as being eligible and well in the running for a place. Of those seen by the Boards about a third are given awards. When the Scheme started, the awards were made on a Quota basis for each university, but in recent years, with the increase in the number of participating universities, Fellowships have been allocated on a country-wide basis. The final assessment and selection of candidates is made by the Adviser after his return to London, and he then prepares two lists of candidates, awards and reserves. These lists are examined and finally approved in the Board of Trade, and the awards are announced early in the New Year.

One of the main advantages offered by the Athlone Fellowships over other awards is its flexibility in allowing Fellows a freedom of choice between university and industry or a bit of both. The founders of the scheme had hoped that many Fellows would opt for industrial experience but university programmes have been more popular than industrial from the start. Several Fellows who choose two-year research programmes at university decide to carry on after the fellowships expire in order to work for a Ph.D. Men doing this in recent years number between twelve and fifteen each year. But there is no question of extending the fellowships for a third year to help finance these studies and Fellows are warned well in advance that they must find other means of support. In the early days of the scheme, the National Research Council of Canada was liberal in its scholarship awards which enabled Athlones to finish a third year at university, but latterly the policy of the Council has become more rigid. In 1967 out of fifteen Athlone applicants, only eight were successful in securing help from this source.

One of the conditions of the award is that Fellows must undertake to return to Canada to work: In engineering after the Fellowship expires, or after any extension granted for further study. Most Fellows are scrupulous in honoring this condition and there have

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been only a few exceptions but these could be an embarrassment to the Managing Committee in the event of the operation of the scheme being challenged.

The Athlone Program Description

In 1959, the British Board of Trade published a booklet entitled:

“The Athlone Fellowships—Experience in Britain for Canadian Engineers” which provided additional information on the Athlone Fellowship Program, with the object *“to explain what the Athlone Fellowships are; what they offer to the young Canadian engineer; and how Fellows are selected.”* This booklet was made available to most Fellows and describes with somewhat different words than was presented in the 1953 paper by Dr. Abbott, as quoted above. It has the following preamble:

The rapid expansion of Canada’s industry is calling for large numbers of men with high scientific, technical and managerial ability. To such men the United Kingdom’s industrial plants, research organizations, colleges and universities have a great deal to offer. Only, however, if they are seen at first hand is it possible to appreciate fully the scope and quality of engineering research, development, design and production practices in the United Kingdom.

Since 1951, Her Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom has, therefore, been providing Athlone Fellowships for young Canadian engineers. The Fellowships are of two years’ duration and are granted on the understanding that their holders afterwards return to Canada to follow their careers. The number available each year is now 41. They enable selected engineering graduates to carry their education and training further in the United Kingdom under arrangements made to meet their individual needs. At the same time they enable their holders to meet people in the United Kingdom and become acquainted with their way of life, thus fostering understanding between the two countries and building the basis upon which trade across the Atlantic can be increased in both directions.

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The Athlone Program Termination

The **14th Newsletter** included a short write-up on the report that recommended the termination of the Athlone Fellowship Program, which is presented below:

Report Of The Working Party On The Industrial Training Of Overseas Nationals

The Working Party was set up in July 1968 to review present arrangements in the United Kingdom for the industrial training of overseas nationals, particularly from the point of view of what contribution these trainees can be expected to make to furthering Britain's export trade. Also considered was the work being done in this field by the United Kingdom's trading competitors and whether any changes might be made in existing British arrangements in the interests of export promotion. It is not intended to go into the details of the Working Party report the recommendations which have been accepted by the British Government. A large cross-section of British industry was approached for comments and suggestions on the current training programmes and these were duly examined by the Working Party. The Athlone Fellowships scheme was included. [The Report was published on 26th September, 1969; copies may be purchased from Her Majesty's Stationery Office (10 shillings).]

The main conclusion of the Working Party was that there should be a shift within the ceiling of present Government expenditure from the current concentration on Canada to more being done for trainees from the rest of the Commonwealth, Europe and the developing countries. They recommend that the Athlone Fellowships scheme should end. Current awards will run their normal course.

The Working Party found that the Athlone scheme had worked very well and had made a valuable contribution over the last eighteen years. However, since the inception of the scheme in 1951, Canada has rapidly developed in all spheres and can now offer extensive training facilities herself. It is also a fact that there is now a much wider knowledge in Canada of what the United Kingdom has to offer in the way of engineering exports.

Of the major block of Government expenditure on training programmes—the £140,000 per annum spent by the Board of Trade—over two thirds goes on the Athlone scheme and the Working Party considered that it was no longer right to devote such a high proportion of the resources available to a single country.

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The recommendations of the working party were that:

(a) a British Office for Trainee Exchange be set up to encourage the exchange of trainees not only between Britain and the rest of Europe but also with other developed countries;

(b) increased Government support should be given to the Overseas Scholarships Scheme of the Confederation of British Industry. This Scheme, instituted in 1950, brings to Britain about 100 scholars a year from the Commonwealth and developing countries for training in a wide variety of engineering industries;

(c) the Institute of Directors, whose scheme brings overseas nationals to Britain for intensive tours of industry, should be helped to expand their scheme;

(d) **the Athlone scheme should be ended (and the money currently spent on the scheme diverted to the other recommendations)**[author's emphasis]. The usual number of Athlone Fellowships will be offered in 1970, there after no further awards will be made. The Fellows appointed in 1970 will be the last. But Canada will be included in the expanded CBI Overseas Scholarships Scheme, on the same basis as other Commonwealth developed countries;

(e) finally, the Report suggests that training by private industry might be helped if more overseas nationals were made eligible for training grants under the Industrial Training Act, 1964.

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The **15th Newsletter** identified and described the termination of the Athlone program, and also discussed what might be a follow-on program. In that newsletter, there were **two** interesting discussions:

- (1) Can a Substitute for Athlone be Found; and
- (2) Continuing the Newsletters.

1. Can a Substitute for Athlone be Found?

by the Executive Committee of the Ontario Athlone Association

Since 1951, Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, acting through the Board of Trade—now the Department of Trade & Industry—has sponsored the Athlone Fellowships Scheme whereby 40 or so young Canadian engineering graduates annually took up postgraduate training in the U.K. The individual programmes normally included two years at a university, two years in industry or a year in each. The scheme has served many purposes by giving Canadian engineers the advantage of obtaining some of their training in a technically advanced and industrially mature country, while at the same time giving them the opportunity to explore the culture and way of life in the British setting. Important also was the economic purpose of fostering trade and cultural links between the two countries.

For a variety of reasons, Britain has now decided to end the scheme when the 1970 Fellows return to Canada after completing their awards in 1972. It is doubtful if there are any former Athlone Fellows for whom this is not saddening news, as most of them have, for a variety of reasons, attached great value to their years lived in the U.K. Mainly because of this they would like to see some form of the scheme continue for the benefit of more than one generation of Canadians.

The members of the Executive Committee of the Athlone Fellows Association in Ontario have considered the feasibility of creating Canadian-sponsored Fellowships intended for engineering and related studies in the United Kingdom and perhaps Europe and even Asia. It is intended that these Fellowships will resemble in many ways the Athlone Fellowships. The continuance of a Fellowship programme would be based upon the premise that study outside the North American sphere of influence would be both beneficial to the individual and to society at large—especially if there would be a sizeable number of Fellows. It is also felt that a knowledge of foreign countries derived from living in these countries would be beneficial in expanding Canadian markets abroad' and in promoting goodwill and understanding.

At the present time there is a severe shortage of bodies sponsoring postgraduate work outside North America. Money is extremely hard to come by, but if

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programmes are not continued now, there could be severe long-term consequences. With the necessary funds for continuing an Athlone type programme, there is the problem of administering the scheme. A considerable portion of the funds collected would have to go into the expenses for the selection of candidates, the salaries of full and part-time administrators and secretaries, consultants' fees and expenses for arranging the Fellows' programmes abroad. In view of the nature of the activity, it seems logical that the Fellowships would be administered most efficiently by existing organisations which automatically have access to many of these services. The most likely bodies to be approached are the engineering societies in Canada, such as the provincial licensing bodies and national technical societies. The Fellowships Managing Committee could be composed of representatives of these societies as well as former Athlone Fellows. A number of methods have been suggested for financing the proposed scheme. With regard to administering to the Fellows' needs in the United Kingdom or other European countries, one cannot hope to duplicate the "local" guidance which has been provided in the past by the Board of Trade. Also, for the initial placement of Fellows, one would expect to rely heavily on the candidates' own initiative and on advice they can get via the contacts of their professors, engineering acquaintances and former Athlone Fellows. It would, however, be worthwhile approaching the Department of Trade & Industry for their advice as to what arrangements might be made about the placement of Fellows. The European Organization for Economic Co-operation, or other bodies may prove willing to assist in the placement of Fellows in Continental countries. The methods identified included:

- (a) total financing by the Fellows themselves—past and present Athlone and future Fellows
- (b) petition the Canadian Government to continue the program, supported by the British Government for 20 years, to the great benefit of Canada
- (c) ask a foundation established by private enterprise, such as the Rockefeller Foundations or the Ford Foundation, etc., for support
- (d) make the Canadian Fellowships into a project of the engineering societies previously intended.
- (e) a combination of (a) in conjunction with support from one or more of the other sources. A good system might be one in which the various possible sources mentioned would pledge amounts depending upon what the Athlone Fellows themselves would be willing to contribute.

It is estimated that \$200,000.00 per year would be required to operate this scheme on any reasonable basis. [This 1970 amount would be about \$1,300,000 in 2018.]

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Loyal as "old" Athlone Fellows may be, it is not likely we can raise such a large amount each year from internal contributions. It is very evident that funds must be solicited from other sources.

We invite comments from all parties reading this discussion. We are interested in hearing from the Department of Trade & Industry, the E.I.C., the A.P.E.O., etc., from possible donors and especially from Athlone Fellows.

The immediate decisions to be made are:

- (i) to abandon forever the idea of continuing some form of the Athlone Fellowships,
- (ii) to postpone the idea of setting up the continuing programme until a more hospitable economic climate prevails, or
- (iii) persevere immediately in an attempt to continue some form of the Athlone Fellowships Scheme.

We await your comments.

Editor's note: *Correspondence on this article should be addressed direct to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Ontario Athlone Fellows Association.*

[To the extent of my research, no formal comments were received and reviewed.]

2. Continuing the Newsletter

by Dr. J. D. Brown (1958 N.S.T.C.) and F. E. F. Dunford (1967 Queen's)

One of the casualties of the decision to terminate the Athlone Fellowships Scheme is the Newsletter, with this being the penultimate issue. How many of us have seen that blue cover appear in the mail and felt a warm surge of recollection and, if only for a short time, a feeling of belonging to something quite special. The Newsletter may be a tenuous link but it is nevertheless, a link with our "Fellows". How quickly will we begin to lose track of who is where and doing what when the present Newsletter stops.

With these thoughts in mind, we have considered the feasibility of continuing the Newsletter in some form, but there are also certain practical reasons for continuation. There is a strong feeling among many Athlones that the scheme should be continued. Any replacement scheme which might be devised would require full support from ourselves. The necessity and desirability of maintaining a Newsletter as a means of keeping in contact through the period of establishing a new Fellowship Scheme are self-evident. We Athlones at Nova Scotia Technical College are prepared to undertake the job of producing a Newsletter. We solicit

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your support. Preliminary estimates indicate that a Newsletter of some 70 pages, sufficiently big to contain address lists and contributed articles, could be printed and distributed for approximately \$1.25 per copy.

For a first issue subscription, would you be willing to pay \$2.00 with a reduction in succeeding years? If so, stand up and be counted. If sufficient support is indicated by the return of the form which is the bottom half of the tear-off page, we will proceed in our intention. If insufficient support is indicated we will, with regret, forget the whole idea. So too, in that case, may the people who are working to keep the Athlone Fellowships alive forget the whole idea.

[Again, I found no further response to these suggestions.]

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Participation in the Program across Canadian Institutions, By Province and Institution

Details of all the 810 Athlone Fellows in the 161 pages of the **Athlone Fellowship Newsletter #16**. These are summarized in the following table:

University	No. of Fellows	Year of first Fellowship award
Alberta, UofA	55	1951
British Columbia, UBC	99	1951
Carleton	1	1961
Ecole Polytechnique	53	1951
Laval	41	1951
Manitoba	67	1951
McGill	78	1951
McMaster	17	1962
New Brunswick	37	1951
Nova Scotia Technical	49	1952
Ottawa	12	1959
Queens	63	1951
Royal Military College	19	1964
Saskatchewan	44	1951
Sherbrooke	6	1959
Sir George Williams	6	1968
Toronto	110	1951
Waterloo	24	1962
Western Ontario	17	1959
Windsor	7	1964

Note— there were 5 Fellows from miscellaneous institutions which completes the total of 810 Athlone Fellows.

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The preceding Table shows the “top 20” Engineering Universities in Canada at the end of the Athlone program [1970]. The 5 “miscellaneous” institutions are listed below:

California Institute of Technology	1	1955
Georgia Institute of Technology	1	1960
Michigan College of Mining and Technology	1	1963
Provincial College of Technology and Art Calgary	1	1957
University College, London	1	1957

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Program Evaluation

During the early operation of the Athlone Fellowship Program, there was no formal communication from the program organizers and administrators, and the Athlone Fellows. After five years, an annual newsletter was initiated, and was produced every year until the program was terminated in 1970. One of the best indicators of how the program was working was the *Forward* and the *Notes* of each of the Newsletters.

Although I have not been able to locate a formal evaluation of the **Program** in any of the documentation received, it seems obvious to me that this excellent program was really excellent for the Engineers that were honored to be selected. However, the impact of the program on the trade in British engineering goods and services seems to be lacking, as there appears not to be a method to be used to make this evaluation. And such a method could be quite complex, probably more than a simple comparison of increases in British trade with Canada as a function of time and number of Athlone Fellows, perhaps with a delay of 10 years after the Athlone Fellows date.

I can only conclude that the **Program**, once initiated, was part of a complex government funded program that was not too large to attract too much attention until, eventually, it was questioned by the Department of the Treasury. Once questioned, it could not be defended and was thus terminated.

For the Fellows, the **Program** was exceedingly successful—just review their letters in a separate Part of this document—letters included in the newsletters, as well as contemporary letters. In addition, there is a copy of an article from a recent edition of the Imperial College Magazine, on Page 31. The Fellowship brought new experiences to over 800 well qualified Canadian engineers, experiences that most would not have otherwise experienced. For many, like myself, allowed them the pleasure and privilege of visiting the heart of the British Commonwealth, as it was then, and earning an advanced degree from a prestigious British university, or acquiring unique engineering experience at a leading British engineering industry. In addition, all the Fellows had the opportunity to see and to live the British experience during those two redevelopment decades following the end of the Second World War.

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The Athlone Organization's View of the Program

One of the most interesting extracts of the **Athlone Newsletters** is the Forward of the first Newsletter by the Earl of Athlone, which I quote below, followed by the farewell note, entitled "Retrospect" by the last Athlone Program Advisor, F. E. A. Manning.

Earl of Athlone's Forward, from Newsletter #1:

"I have, over a long period, been associated in one way or another with a number of educational schemes, but I know of none more deserving of continued encouragement than the Fellowship Scheme to which I have been privileged to give my name."

[This is the only extract that I have been able to locate. When the complete information becomes available, it will be inserted.]

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F. E. A. Manning's, "Retrospect", from Newsletter #16

Now that the Athlone Fellowships Scheme is within a year of its official end, I have indulged a long-felt urge to read every one of the 810 personal files of all the Athlone Fellows and to read again all the 15 Newsletters. What a book could be written based on gleanings from this field! But how difficult it is to write a short article that is not merely a list of names and a set of statistics!

The Newsletter itself was suggested by John Godfrey (1954, Manitoba) and No.1 issued in December 1956. Except for a change of format in January 1969, it has appeared in exactly the same form yearly until this, the last number. The first five numbers contained underlined appeals for contributions which did increase in number and interest from 1962, but the flow dried up before this Newsletter was prepared and so I have been coerced into filling some space. Had it been a practical possibility, I would rather have produced a collection of about 25 articles under some such title as "The Best of the Athlone Fellowships Newsletter". Apart from excellent articles on the differences between the Canadian and British way of life as seen by wives as well as husbands and differences in the methods of obtaining higher degrees, one would read of London, of West and Northern England, of Scotland and of Wales. There would be mention of brass-rubbing; Goonhilly satellite communication station; heather skiing; a holiday in the U.S.S.R.; returning home via an Imperial College expedition to Africa and South America; student "rags"; queuing for tickets for Covent Garden Opera House; tandem cycling; and thoughts on what the individual Fellow has gained apart from the technical aspects.

My "Collection" would have started with the complete Foreword by the Earl of Athlone to Newsletter No. 1, but here I quote only one paragraph:

"I have, over a long period, been associated in one way or another with a number of educational schemes, but I know of none more deserving of continued encouragement than the Fellowship Scheme to which I have been privileged to give my name."

Sad to relate, the Earl died during the following year, but Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, continued to show interest in the scheme and graciously received the Fellows arriving in 1970 at a reception arranged by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

There have been four Chairmen of the Managing Committee, three Vice-Chairmen, five Secretaries (one of these for a few months only) and four Advisers. These men were all keenly interested in the scheme and gave generously of their time and energy, whether full-time civil servants or volunteers from outside. Two members of the Managing Committee have served on it from start to finish, namely Professors H. E. M. Barlow and E. G. Cullwick, and to them thanks for staunch support, informed comment and sound advice are rightly due. Professor Cullwick merits special mention for his efforts here and in Canada to stimulate the formation of a Canada-

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based replacement scheme. The first Chairman, Sir Arthur Fleming, and the first Adviser, Dr. William Abbott, have passed away, but their splendid work in devising the scheme and guiding it through the early years was undoubtedly responsible for the high reputation it has achieved. Time has caused small changes to be made, particularly since 1959 when 5 Canadian Universities requested to be added to the original 11 participating, and we ended with 22. Nevertheless, the original form and policies are clearly recognisable at the end. Honours were conferred upon some serving civil servants for their work, viz. on Dr. W. Abbott, first Adviser, C.M.G.; on Dr. H. H. Burness, who worked with Dr. Abbott and became second Adviser, C.B.E.; and on T. W. Turner, a Secretary to the Managing Committee for six years, M.B.E.

It was interesting to note that comments on details of the scheme made by members of all intakes from 1951 to 1970 were very much alike; except in so far as it had been found possible to meet some requests. Similarly, the experiences in industry and university related at Conferences from 1958 to 1970 were very much the same. There were small changes in the needs of Fellows as conditions changed over the years. In earlier years, the young Canadians were usually single and prepared to spend two or three years in the United Kingdom and were intent on gaining industrial experience rather than further academic education. Latterly, about 50% of those arriving have been accompanied by their wives and many were not willing to accept the financial burden of remaining for more than, one year in the United Kingdom. A one-year Fellowship was introduced to avoid the unexpected premature return to Canada of an appreciable number of Fellows whose places could often not be filled. It also enabled us to give more than 41 Fellowships in each of the last eight years by setting the cost of one-year Fellowships against that of two- year Fellowships on a sliding scale. The table on an earlier page is interesting as illustrating change over 20 years, but it should be read with appreciation of the fact that the recently introduced one-year courses for "Master" degrees in this country include reports on projects and each project is usually an industrial one.

From the first, the Fellows selected were of a high standard which has been maintained from "A.F./51/01 Armour, J. M." to "A.F./70/47 Zilm, D. H.". Not one has caused us real trouble, even if some have been a little pernickety or tiresome. A very few have remained in or returned to this country to work, but this trickle of immigration has been completely swamped by a flood of emigrants to Canada in the form of very happy wives. Most Fellows expressed in writing at the end of their stay their appreciation of the way the scheme was administered and a rather surprisingly high number commented on the personal benefit they had gained from living for a time out of Canada and seeing it with a fresh outlook.

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My own eleven years as Adviser, including 9 interview tours and one holiday spent in Canada (hopefully not the last) have been uniformly happy and rewarding. From the first I have looked upon my job from the viewpoint of its immediate benefit to Canada rather than of the long-term benefit to the United Kingdom. I have commented in previous articles on the kindness and the help I invariably received and many friendships made will continue for life. Those readers to whom the iron ring is more or less a matter of course will not realize what a thrill the ceremony of induction was to me and with what pride I wear this ring. It is a tangible sign how close my association is with what is to me a second homeland and with what affection I recollect that country and the Engineers in it.

During my interview tours I met many groups of Athlone Fellows collected together and entertained with generous hospitality by the deeply interested and friendly British Trade Commissioners in Canada. These officials move elsewhere after their various tours of duty and all too soon no British Diplomatic Service representatives in Canada will know anything about Athlone Fellows. Many people have expressed the hope that this will not mean the end of social gatherings of Athlone Fellows in suitable centres, but continuation will involve some form of organisation of local groups. I hope that well-disposed individuals in many centres will act as focal points for keeping Athlone Fellows in touch with each other and will maintain liaison with similar focal points elsewhere throughout Canada. I was most disappointed to hear that the 10% response to Dr. Brown's endeavour to list those who wanted to continue some form of Newsletter was not considered sufficient to justify the project. Such seems to be the fate of many questionnaires. In 1961, an enquiry about the desire for an Athlone Tie met with only a 10% response.

Reverting to the Earl of Athlone's words quoted earlier in this article, there is no shadow of doubt that the Athlone Fellowships Scheme is one of the finest ever instituted, that both Britain and Canada have derived great and continuing benefit, and that its demise is deeply regretted. Two distinctive features stand out and these are not found anywhere else in the world. One was that a large number of student engineers went from your country to ours as a coherent body. Other schemes only apply to small numbers of engineers, very often only one or two under a scheme covering other disciplines in greater numbers. Another feature was its flexibility, particularly in allowing a mixed programme of academic work and industrial experience, and no other existing or proposed scheme offers this facility.

The scholarships awarded by the Confederation of British Industry in Canada will not provide similar facilities. Few Commonwealth Scholarships are likely to be given to engineers for the competition is fierce. Other existing schemes will remain static and the overall result must be that the number of Canadian engineers coming to the

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United Kingdom annually to further their training or education will fall by about 30. This was quickly realized by Athlone Fellows in Canada and others and several suggestions have been made for small or large replacement schemes originating in Canada. So far there has been no real progress reported to me and it seems that some existing body in Canada has to be found to do the organization. At this end, we will give help but not finance. I hope that something will materialise but it will not be the Athlone Fellowships Scheme.

*And so, goodbye,
F. E. A. Manning*

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Jolly Good Fellows—positive recollections of the Athlone

Article from Imperial Magazine, Issue 44, authored by William Ham Bevan

How the Athlone Fellowship transformed the lives of a generation of Canadian engineers.

“I said I’d waterski on the Thames. Everyone laughed. I had no idea how funny it was until I got to London and saw the river...”

*When recalling the interview for the Athlone Fellowship that brought him to Imperial College London from Winnipeg in Canada, **Neil MacKenzie** (MSc Mechanical Engineering 1967) credits an unintended joke with sealing the deal. He says: “I was asked, ‘What would you do if you went to London?’ I said, ‘I’m going to waterski on the Thames.’ Everyone started to laugh. I had no idea how funny it was until I got to London and saw what the river was like.”*

MacKenzie was one of 810 Canadian graduates to take part in the programme, aimed at bringing the country’s most talented young engineers to the UK for further training. Named in honour of the Earl of Athlone, Canada’s Governor General from 1940 to 1946, it was first mooted by Harold Wilson in 1949 to encourage trade and exchange expertise between the two nations.

The first cohort of Athlone Fellows was selected in 1951. Successful applicants had their passage to England funded, plus their tuition fees, and received a yearly travel grant within the UK, a textbook allowance and a modest weekly stipend (initially £6 10s—the equivalent of around £190 in 2018). They could choose to spend two years—or a single year in some cases—on a university research programme, an industrial secondment or a mixture of the two. The academic route proved most popular. By 1970, when the scheme was wound up, 754 fellows had spent all or part of their time at a British university. Imperial was by far the most sought-after destination, taking a total of 304.

*The successful candidates were warned that they would experience culture shock when they arrived in Britain—“especially those, like me, who were living on the western side of the Rocky Mountains and had hardly been anywhere else,” says **Gary Elfstrom** (PhD Aeronautics 1971). He adds: “They didn’t just pick the highest-marked students as Athlone Fellows, because they might not cope with cultural differences. They were looking for more rounded applicants.”*

*For **Bob Hemmings** (PhD Chemical Engineering & Chemical Technology 1965), one of the first new experiences was the unfamiliar (and unwelcome) smell of kippers at Nutford House, where new fellows were temporarily billeted. A greater surprise was the extent of war damage still in evidence in 1962. He says: “Many areas of London*

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had bomb-damaged ruins—blocks and blocks of devastation. It became more personal to me when I attended Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph. The war was still an open wound.”

Ian Rowe (PhD Electrical Engineering 1967) says: *“Being married with young children, the culture shock was felt by my whole family. We had to find out that you used markets, not supermarkets, for groceries if you wanted value. We had to work out the health system and the language: if someone said, ‘I’ll knock you up at 7am tomorrow’, it didn’t mean they were going to bang me in the belly.”*

*Dealing with pre-decimal currency presented another challenge. **Spruce Riordon** (PhD Electrical Engineering 1967), who was six years into his career as a radar engineer when he applied in 1963, says: “They still had pounds, shillings and pence. If I had a substantial calculation to do, I’d switch back to Canadian dollars, work it out and convert back. The cars were very small—much smaller than ours—and rationing had ended not long before, so the quality of food was very uneven. But it was exciting to see London.”*

Becoming part of an international community at Imperial was an education in itself. MacKenzie says: “One way the Athlone changed my life was by showing me I was living in a bigger world than Canada. One day I went to College and around seven of my colleagues weren’t there—they were Israeli, and they’d gone back to fight in the six-day war.”

*When **Murray Clamen** (PhD Civil Engineering 1973) arrived at Imperial in 1970, there was political volatility in Canada, making for bittersweet memories of his first year. He says: “I went back to get married that winter and there was a serious crisis going on in Quebec. The FLQ [Quebec Liberation Front] had kidnapped the minister, Pierre Laporte and the British Trade Commissioner, James Cross. We later met him at an event, and he spoke about how difficult the situation had been for his family.”*

The Athlone Fellows also had to adjust to big differences in academic culture, with British research degrees far less regimented than their North American counterparts. Riordon says: “In Canada and the States, you went through a series of examinations and presentations to work towards the point where you could proceed with the thesis. In Britain, you were just thrown in and had to sink or swim. It prepared you for independent research.”

Monique Frize (MPhil Electrical Engineering 1969), the second female Athlone, had little trouble in negotiating the male culture of Imperial. She says: *“There hadn’t been many women at Imperial, but I never felt treated any differently from the men. Everyone was supportive, though Bill the technician would always find one of us*

