

Emeritus Professor Harold Carter 1925-2017

Emeritus Professor Harold Carter, who died in December 2017 at the age of 92, spent his entire professional career on the staff of the Department of Geography in what was then the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. He was born in Neath in 1925 into an ordinary home, his father being a railway clerk with the Great Western Railway. After a good record at Neath Grammar School, and completion of National Service in the RAF, he studied Geography at Aberystwyth. He was an accomplished sportsman, especially rugby. He played for Neath, for the RAF and for the university 1st team. This interest stayed with him for life. His future wife, Mari, was a contemporary at Aberystwyth where she studied Welsh language and literature. Harold graduated with a First and was immediately appointed Assistant Lecturer in 1950. He rose through the ranks, gaining an MA. and D.Litt. on the way, becoming Gregynog Professor of Human Geography in 1968 and Head of Department in 1983. He became one of Britain's leading Human Geographers, and was invited as a distinguished scholar and visiting Professor to universities in the USA, Australia and South Africa. At home he served as President of the Institute of British Geographers and as a member of national research councils. In Aberystwyth he played a full part in the administration of the College, as Dean of Arts, Vice-Principal, and Dean of Welsh Medium Studies. On top of this he got on with his teaching, supervision of undergraduate and postgraduate students and writing, and was always in demand from other universities as an examiner. He retired in 1986.

In his teaching and research there were two main fields of enquiry, which generally fell in chronological order. The first was Urban Geography which produced an outpouring of academic papers and books, some of which drew on his considerable knowledge of towns in Wales. Of seven separate books, one of them "The Study of Urban Geography" went through reprinting's, four revisions and translations into several languages. His second field was the wider society and economy of Wales, with a focus on the geography of the Welsh language. This wider interest can be seen in his editorship of the National Atlas of Wales. Although brought up as an English speaker, from 1950 onwards he put his mind to mastering the Welsh language, through classes and through his wife. The language became central to his research and writing in academic papers and books, in which he teamed up with his successor in the Gregynog Chair, Professor John Aitchison. Although long retired he remained very active, and in 2010 published another book which set out his personal views on Wales and the Welsh, entitled "Against the Odds: the survival of Welsh identity". Retirement gave him the freedom to get on with his interests. He was glad to be out of the bureaucracy and the heaping of layer upon layer of management in universities.

Harold was a cultural man, but always modest about the breadth of his learning. He had a love of good music, and his grasp of literature was most impressive. With his insight and knowledge it is not surprising that a highlight of his day was the completion of the Times Crossword. He would move happily from that to watching the Ospreys against the Scarlets on television. He and Mari really enjoyed their travels abroad, and Mari's death in 2016 was a crushing loss to him. Harold made friends easily. It was a joy to be with him on social occasions and to see him engage enthusiastically, no matter what the topic of conversation. He was courteous and caring, and most grateful for all that was done for him when his mobility deteriorated in 2017. Those around him were relieved to see that he remained as mentally alert as ever, and living at home, right to the end of his distinguished life.

Roy Lewis. 11 April, 2018.