Frederick (Derick) Valentine Atkinson

Frederick (Derick) Valentine Atkinson, scholar, enthusiastic teacher and gifted researcher passed away on November 13, 2002, after a long illness, in Toronto, Canada. A native of Pinner, Middlesex in England he saw light on January 25, 1916, the elder son of George Arthur Atkinson and Dorothy Boxer. His father was a journalist and film critic for the *Daily Telegraph*; his mother's grandfather was Admiral Lord Boxer, Harbourmaster of the City of Québec during the 19th Century. Atkinson read books about Calculus at age 12 and mathematics came easy to the young Derick.

In June 1929, he attended the old and legendary St. Paul's School in West Kensington. Here he spent his formative years, 1929-1934, in a place that educated the minds of the poet John Milton, the diarist Samuel Pepys, the mathematicians J. E. Littlewood, FRS, (of Hardy and Littlewood fame) and G.N. Watson FRS, among scores of others. When Atkinson was 15 the High Master of St. Paul's wrote: "Extremely promising: He should make a brilliant mathematician", prophetic words that would echo into his future. He entered the Queen's College, Oxford, in 1934 with a Scholarship. While a Tabardar at Queen's he was secretary of the Chinese Student Society and also a member of the Indian Student Society. Although it was not well known, he was fluent in many languages including English, Latin, Ancient Greek, Urdu, German, Hungarian, Russian with some proficiency in Spanish, Italian and French. His fluency in Russian was all the more remarkable given that he never (officially) followed a Russian course at Oxford. He also played the accordion and the piano with a passion and a pleasure that was remarkable. During the years of Atkinson's stay in Oxford, A.E.H. Love, FRS, held the Sedleian Chair of Natural Philosophy and it is well known that Augustus Love inspired G.H. Hardy, FRS FRSE (Hon), into reading Camille Jordan's *Cours d'Analyse*, a book that would eventually lead to Hardy's own monograph (*A Course of Pure Mathematics*) thereby forever changing the face of pure mathematics in the UK. This connection with Augustus Love may have led Atkinson to work with his later mentor, E.C. Titchmarsh, FRS, (the Savilian Professor of Geometry) with whom he took his D. Phil. in 1939. His dissertation comprised the finding of asymptotic formulae for the average value of the square of the Riemann zeta function on the critical line, a work that is still under scrutiny today. He was fond of recounting to students and colleagues alike that his final Examining Board at Oxford consisted of G.H. Hardy, J.E. Littlewood and E.C. Titchmarsh!

Appointed Senior Demy at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1939-1940 his appointment was cut short by WWII. In 1940 he accepted a commission into the Intelligence Corps and he worked in the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park. He met his wife and great love Dusja Haas, some time during this appointment. He was promoted to Captain in 1943 and achieved the rank of Major in the British Intelligence Corps some time in 1945. Offered an appointment in late 1945 (declined) as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematics at Marischal College, in the University of Aberdeen, he opted instead for a Lectureship in Christ Church, Oxford, his first (accepted) formal academic appointment until 1948. During the period 1948-1955 he was a Full Professor in Mathematics (as well as Chair, and Dean of Arts as well) at University College, Ibadan, in Nigeria. He left Nigeria in 1955 for Australia where he joined Canberra University College (now part of Australian National University) to become Head of its Department of Mathematics. After a brief stay in Canberra he departed (1960) for his final destination, the University of Toronto, in Toronto, Canada, where he was a Professor until his retirement in 1982 and Professor Emeritus until his death in 2002. Among his many honours and activities we cite: his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (1967), U. K. Science Research Council Visiting Fellow at the Universities of Dundee and Sussex (1970), British Council Lecturer to U. K. universities (1973), Consulting Editor of the *Proceedings A of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* (1974), Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (1975), Royal Society of Edinburgh Makdougall-Brisbane Prize recipient for 1974-1976, 29th President of the Canadian Mathematical Society (1989-1991), and Von Humboldt Prize recipient (1992).

Atkinson was the author of 2 books and more than 130 papers[1]. Among these we find 13 articles in the Society's *Proceedings A*, including joint papers with Society members J.B. McLeod, M.S.P. Eastham and W.N. Everitt among others (see [5], [7], etc). He is best remembered for his classic text on discrete and continuous boundary problems (1964), and his seminal contributions to differential equations

(e.g., Atkinson-Wilcox Theorem in ellipsoidal geometry and his generalization of Fredholm operators currently known as Atkinson's Theorem). His kindness and humility was legendary. Derick is survived by his wife Dusja and three children, Stephen, Vivienne and Leslie, the latter two having joined the ranks of academe as professional psychologists, and his sister Ann Harland.

Obituary Notice on behalf of the Royal Society of Edinburgh
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Frederick (Derick) Valentine Atkinson. Born January 25 1916, elected Honorary FRSE 3 March 1975, Died November 13 2002.

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[12] (with L.A. Peletier) Bounds for vertical points of solutions of prescribed mean curvature type equations I *Proc. Roy. Soc. Edinb.*, 112A (1989), 15-32.

[13] (with C.T. Fulton) Asymptotics of the Titchmarsh-Weyl m-coefficient for non-integrable potentials, IV *Proc. Roy. Soc. Edinb.* 129A (1999), 663-683.

[1] See a detailed account of his scientific works in the recent paper "A glimpse into the life and times of F.V. Atkinson" by Angelo B. Mingarelli, *Mathematische Nachricten* 278 (12-13), (2005), 1364-1387