

Emeritus Professor Anne Buttimer (1938-2017)

It was with great sadness that the Geographical Society of Ireland announced the death on 15th July 2017 of Emeritus Professor, Anne Buttimer, formerly of UCD. Anne was a noted scholar in the history and philosophy of geographical thought and practice and a leader in developments in human and cultural geography.



She graduated with a BA from University College, Cork in 1957, and her MA in geography was awarded in 1958. Her biography published as part of an interview with Avril Maddrell (2009) in the journal *Gender, Place and Culture* details the international flavour of her experiences, beginning with her PhD from the University of Washington in 1965, 'followed by a year as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Louvain in Belgium, where she studied philosophy. Returning to Washington the following academic year, Buttimer was appointed Assistant Professor of Geography at Seattle University. She was then recruited to a post as Lecturer in Urban Studies at the University of Glasgow (1968-70), where she was part of an interdisciplinary team evaluating urban planning processes, drawing on her training in quantitative techniques and her interdisciplinary perspective (which included psychology from her education courses and philosophy from her time in Belgium). Her two years in Scotland were followed by an appointment initially as post-doctoral fellow (1970-71) and later as assistant and then full Professor of Geography at Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts. Anne went on to work in the USA, Canada, Sweden and latterly Ireland, collaborating and publishing internationally.'

She became Professor of Geography at UCD in 1991 and 'retired' in 2003 but Anne never stopped working on her projects. She was Ireland's pre-eminent and internationally recognised geographer and accumulated a great many honours over her career, including becoming the first Irish President of the International Geographical Union (2000-2004). It was with great delight that Anne welcomed the news in summer 2016 that the Geographical Society of Ireland had won the bid to host the International Geographical Congress in 2024. In late 2016, Anne was awarded UCC's Distinguished Alumnus Award. While she was too unwell to travel to receive the award personally, the Society presented it to her on behalf of UCC just the day before she passed away.

Anne's life and work will be remembered in many fora over the coming months and years and there will be much written about her work and legacy. However, it is only fitting, in this first issue of *Irish Geography* since her passing, that we publish the oration delivered by Prof Willie Smyth (UCC) at her burial. *Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a anam.*

Graveside Oration – Árd na Gaoithe, Watergrasshill, 20 July 2017 for Professor Anne Buttimer

A dhaoine uasail,

I should introduce myself – I am Willie Smyth, Emeritus Professor of Geography at UCC. You, the Buttimer family and your friends and neighbours knew Anne well and her growing up in this part of North Cork. So you are insiders to Anne as a person. I am an outsider to these friendship and kinship worlds but I am an insider to Anne as a geographer and to the kind of geography she espoused and wrote about.

Today, we say our good-byes to an internationally acclaimed scholar – and one of Ireland's greatest women ever. We are very proud in UCC geography department that Anne Buttimer is a graduate of our department – our most distinguished geography graduate by a mile. Brilliant too at languages and this allowed Anne to be a great bridge-builder across the world. Before Christmas last year, the President of UCC invited Anne for dinner to present her with the prestigious UCC Alumni Award – but Anne was unable to attend. The same thing happened this January. It was then that we realised that Anne was seriously ill and she was fighting her last battle.

I first met Anne – then Sr Annette of the Dominican Order – when I was attending a Geography Conference in Boston in 1971. Anne was then at the geography department at Clark University in Worcester, 15 miles from Boston. The evening before, Anne typically organised a reception and party at Clark to honour some of the most prestigious of American geographers who had graduated from Clark some 50 years before. Much later in the 1990s, when Anne had become Professor of Geography at UCD – she brought a dozen postgrads to stay and supper at her home in Lackendarragh just down the road from here, and invited me to socialise and discuss ideas about the changing social geography of rural Ireland. I gather this was an occasional happening and Anne always did the cooking. All of this was to be a feature of Anne's life – this bringing together of people from not only geography but other diverse disciplines to share ideas in a creative, social environment. Anne was a social geographer who was very social. She was always intent on building communities – whether in a working-class estate in Glasgow, or a community of postgrads, or a community of world class scholars and scientists. At the latter, she was absolutely brilliant.

Anne's choice of the Dominican Order was a most fruitful one. For the rest of her life and particularly in her academic work, the Dominicans enriching spiritual and deep scholarship stood to her. She researched and wrote up her PhD while in the order – a wonderful work on French intellectual traditions in human and social geography. The Dominicans were committed to each person's social development and generous too when some people, like Sr Annette – 17 years in the order – bravely chose a new path.

My second extended meetings with Anne came when I went as Professor of Geography to UCC in 1977. Anne regularly invited me for a chat and tea in Lackendarragh. There I met her father, Jerome, an original, innovative, enterprising farmer and a very organised

and determined former Vice-President of the NFA (the National Farmers' Association). I never met Anne's gentle mother Eileen nee Kelleher – by then deceased.

Her father was an important role model for Anne – he was to operate mainly at a national scale, she was to operate at a global scale. Anne grew up on a farm and knew what hard work farming involved. I gather Anne's job as a child was to feed the hens and chickens. It was from this farming world that Anne inherited such a determined, hard-working ethic. My God, look at the range of books and publications, lectures given, seminars organised, her travels, all those airports – I often thought of Anne on all those journeys and empathised when she had to face delayed flights and maybe sometimes lonely airports – but she always had her books.

Lackendarragh was to remain her anchor and her retreat – this part of north Cork here where she could renew her soul. Her love of nature shone through in her lifelong commitment to exploring how the work of scientists, planners and policy-makers could be better integrated – what Fr Eamon Barry eloquently explained as the dialogue project. All this so as to better the lives of ordinary people in cities and countryside – critical also for Anne to better the nurturing of our fragile planet-earth and her plea that geographers should be involved in 'shepherding' and protecting the earth.

Professor Anne Buttimer became an internationally acclaimed scholar but kept her feet on the ground of Lackendarragh's fields – knew country people's ways of saying and doing things and brought that natural grace in dealing with people, whatever their station in life. What a hospitable place the Lackendarragh Buttimer household was.

In 1974, while still with the Dominican Order, Anne wrote a famous paper, *Values in Geography*. There she challenged the dominant scientific model then in vogue in geography, so dependent on statistical measures of human behaviour. Anne was deeply humanist and philosophical and argued that geographers should pay far more attention to the everyday lives and experiences of ordinary people in their own human settings. Four international geographers responded in print to this paper and one of them was the great Swedish and world geographer, Torsten Hägerstrand. Then began one of the most fruitful academic collaborations ever. Anne went to Hägerstrand's Lund University and was awarded the most coveted Swedish Council Fellowship. The ideas were flying between them and out of this came the International Dialogue project from 1977 to 1988 – seeking to discuss common denominators across diverse career experiences, searching for greater understanding and better communications between scientists and policy-makers.

And it was in Lund that Anne met Bertram – a very distinguished and true gentleman, the love of her life. His loss was devastating. We stand today in Árd na Gaoithe where he lies buried. Here Anne's body is joined to him – but the eagle has soared.

Out of the Lund experience and the dialogue project, Anne wrote what I think is her finest book, out of almost 20 – *The Practice of Geography* – published in 1983. It was at this time for 4 or 5 years from 1983 to 1987 that Anne and I made an arrangement – we would fly Anne home from Lund every Christmas to see her father at Lackendarragh and she would lecture on The Nature and Philosophy of geography at UCC for two weeks in

the New Year. She was a wonderful teacher and inspired our final year undergrads like no other – she almost treated them as post-grads bringing the best out of each one. No geography course was ever taught better at UCC.

I should also refer to Anne's 1993 book – *Geography and the Human Spirit*. This is a deeply philosophical reflection on the evolution of major geographical metaphors and how they have been used to shape human societies and their impact on the earth.

Anne's public achievements are immense. She ended up as the first woman President of the International Geographical Union – which is a kind of United Nations of Geographers. She was vice president of Academia Europea, etc. etc. etc. She has been honoured by close on 20 countries and institutes – from India to Finland. And here again another great trait; she brought non-Western geographers into the mainstream – Japanese, Chinese – as well as the Latin Americans. Anne was no ego-centric Westerner – she had a global vision. She has won as many medals and honours as Christy Ring – the difference being that Christy's medals are All-Ireland or Munster medals. Anne's medals and honours come from all over the world.

Bá mhór an onóir domsa beith ag caint faoi Anne Buttimer ar an ocaid seo – sea, ocaid brónach ach lá céiliúrach freisin. Taimíd ag ceilúradh saibhreas saoil agus obair an tOllamh iontach seo Anne Buttimer. Ní raibh a leithéid riamh in Éireann agus táim cinnte ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís. Go ndéana Dia trócaire ar a h-anam Dílis.

Willie Smyth