

WITS UPDATE

Winter 2002/03

*Happy New Year
to all of our Members!*

WITS 2002 AGM

November 30th Chief O'Neills Hotel

The 2002 WITS AGM was held on Saturday November 30th at Chief O'Neills in Smithfield. Apart from normal business matters, Eucharia Meehan gave a presentation on the future strategy of WITS. The AGM voted to allow the 2003 executive committee to implement its new strategy. (The new executive had their first meeting on January 04th, 2003 to discuss the WITS strategy and agenda for 2003. Both the strategy and assigned working groups for 2003 will be discussed in the next WITS update.)

WITS was sad to see a few members and friends leave the organisation, but delighted to welcome new members to both WITS and the executive committee.

Leaving the Executive Committee: Catherine Frehill, Bridget Ginnity, Helen Hughes, Marty Sanders, and Bláithín Tarpey. (Bláithín will remain with WITS to complete the Talent Bank Project.)

The New Executive Committee for 2003

Chairperson	Eucharia Meehan
Vice Chairperson	Lisa Martinez
Secretary	Elaine Harris
Treasurer	Geraldine Cahillane
Ordinary Members	
Ciara Egan	Caitriona Lambert
Bernie Manning	Aoife McGovern
Ruth McMahon	Ita White

Thanks to Anne MacLellan who has agreed to be the WITS representative at the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) and who will participate at the Education Panel meetings.

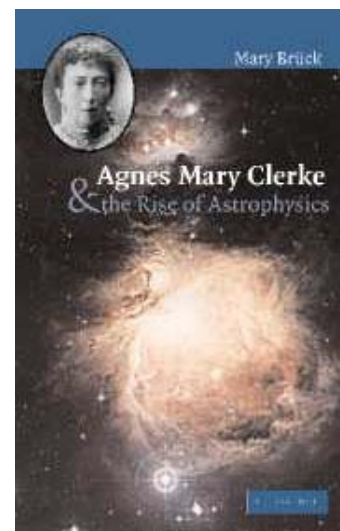
Following the AGM, a light lunch was served at Chief O'Neill's allowing members to catch up on news, get to know new members and say good-bye to departing members. An interesting and informative tour of Kilmainham Jail and Museum was given after lunch. For

those who haven't toured the jail, it is highly recommended and provides a bit of political Irish history for our visitors to Ireland.

Leinster Events

Agnes Clerke Lecture

In association with the Science and Technology Committee of the RDS and WITS, an evening lecture was held on October 23rd at the RDS with Dr. Maire Bruck, who provided a captive audience with an overview of the life and times of Agnes Clerke, a self-made astrophysicist. Dr. Bruck gave excerpts from her book, entitled *Agnes Mary Clerke & the Rise of Astrophysics*.



Front Cover of Mary Bruck's Biography on
Agnes Mary Clerke

Agnes Clerke was born in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century and achieved fame as the author of *A History of Astronomy during the Nineteenth Century*. Through her career, she became a leading commentator on astronomy and astrophysics in the English-speaking world. Dr. Bruck's book describes the life and work of this extraordinary woman. It also chronicles the development of astronomy in the last decades of pre-Einstein science and introduces many of the great figures in astronomy.

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Leinster Events Cont'd.

Readers interested in purchasing a copy of Agnes Clerke's biography may visit:

<http://books.cambridge.org/0521808448.htm>

Unveiling of Plaque dedicated to Margaret Huggins

On Saturday, October 26th, in association with the National Committee for Commemorative Plaques to Engineers and Scientists, a plaque was unveiled in acknowledgement to the work and accomplishments of Margaret Huggins (1848-1915). The unveiling took place in Monkstown, with Dr. Marie Bruck performing the ceremony.



Margaret Huggins (1848-1915)

Margaret Huggins features in Dr. Bruck's book on Agnes Clerke, as both Margaret and her husband were good friends of Agnes Clerke through the mutual interest in astronomy. Born as Margaret Lindsey Murray in 1848, Margaret became accomplished in music, painting, writing, an expert on antique furniture, and astronomy. Her interest in astronomy began early in her life when her grandfather taught her the constellations. She began to construct homemade instruments and later arranged to meet William Huggins, a spectroscopist, through a telescope maker, Howard Grubb of Dublin. Margaret later married William in 1875 and they became close

collaborators and produced some of the earliest spectra of astronomical features, most notably the Orion nebula.

STEPS 2002 CONFERENCE

"The Gender Gap in Engineering"

The STEPS Conference was held at the IEI in Ballsbridge on 22nd November 2002. The conference addressed the gender imbalance within the engineering profession. Speakers from both the private and public sectors provided insights into gender statistics regarding academic performance at the secondary level, mentoring and networking programmes available to women, and issues currently facing women in industry. Caitriona Lambert of WITS gave an excellent presentation of WITS and The Role Model Project. WITS was referenced by several speakers, including Sile de Valera, who gave the opening address, thus heightening the awareness and achievements of WITS to the conference participants.

WITS & MENTORLINK



Mentorlink-Ireland is a project funded by the Equality for Women Measure. Some of the issues mentorlink addresses are 1) the lack of young women entering engineering programmes, 2) the retention of female students in engineering courses, and 3) the equality of opportunity and support structure for female graduates entering the workplace. WITS members interested in serving as mentors or being mentored through the project may contact mentorlink directly. A website link will be available on the WITS website links page. More information on the mentorlink program for woman can be found at <http://www.mentorlink.ie/>