

WILSON HAROLD MAZE

Harold Maze, geographer and university administrator, died on 24 July 1985 aged 74.

Born in Ireland, Harold came to live in Australia at the age of 11. Although thoroughly Australian in outlook, he never lost his Irish accent, and old friends referred to him as 'Pat' all his life.

Harold enrolled as a science undergraduate at the University of Sydney, graduating BSc with First Class Honours in Geography and the University Medal in 1934. He was awarded his MSc, also in Geography, in 1936. On graduation, Harold was appointed Demonstrator in the Department of Geography at the University of Sydney, at that time the only Department of Geography in Australia, having been founded by Griffith Taylor in 1920. As one of the four or five academics in the Department, Harold made a very significant contribution to the development of Geography as a major university discipline in this country.



Harold was essentially a physical geographer, with major interests in topographic mapping, land use and soil science. He was firmly convinced that field observation and measurement was the basis of physical geography, and led his students into the field at every available opportunity. Generations of second and third year students, especially those enrolled for degrees in the Faculty of Science, will recall the sweat and tears involved in carrying out the very demanding assignments set by Harold. Many students will also acknowledge that Harold, with his rigorous and down-to-earth approach, was responsible for teaching them methods and techniques that have stood them in good stead ever since.

Harold's penchant for field work, coupled with a creative imagination and a lively enthusiasm, led him to some very interesting and valuable projects in his own research. For instance, well before the establishment of soil conservation services in the various states, Harold had pioneered constructional techniques to control soil erosion on Australian pastoral and farming properties. In particular, properties at Tamworth, Cassilis and Wellington were developed as sophisticated demonstration models. As one would expect from Harold, each project was planned on the basis of sound hydrological principles, and only after considerable field and laboratory research on soil-moisture relationships.

Although Australian geography expanded exponentially in the 1950s, there was a period of stagnation in the years immediately following World War II. Harold, becoming impatient, felt he could put his considerable energies to better use elsewhere. He joined the administrative staff of the University of Sydney as Assistant Registrar and, excelling in his new role, rose rapidly to Registrar, Assistant Principal, and — in 1968 — to Deputy Principal.

Harold did many things as an academic administrator, but for one in particular he will go down in University history: the acquisition and development of the Darlington area as a major extension to campus. With vastly increased numbers of students, it became apparent that extra accommodation had to be found. Harold resisted very strong pressures for the development of high rise within the existing grounds and, after a torrid series of negotiations, obtained the approval of state and local government authorities for the resumption of the Darlington area, so that the University could expand laterally and have room to breathe.

Harold's reputation as a forceful, no-nonsense administrator led him to a number of extra-curricular appointments such as Macquarie University Council, Crown Trustee of the Australian Museum, the Interim Council of the Sydney Teachers College CAE, the Board of the United Dental Hospital, and the Senate of the University of Sydney. He was also largely responsible for the planning and establishment of International House, and his contribution was acknowledged in 1985 when the latest extension was named the W. H. Maze building.

For his services to the community, Harold was awarded the MBE and OBE. For his contribution to the University of Sydney the University conferred on him one of its highest awards — the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science. His many friends, colleagues, and former students will remember him with respect, gratitude and affection.

T. LANGFORD-SMITH