

From 'Journal' to *Geographical Viewpoint A* brief history of the journal of the AGTI

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Abstract

The idea of the AGTI was formulated in a gathering of teachers in Academy House on the 22nd of September 1961, with the first meeting, at which the constitution was adopted being held in 1962. As we mark the 50th anniversary of its foundation during this academic year, this article will reflect on one of the fruits of the organisation - this journal, *Geographical Viewpoint*. In this brief article, we chart the emergence of the journal from its first issue in 1964 to today, highlighting the various developments over its 47 year history. The article ends with some thoughts about the future of the journal.

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Introduction

As the 35 teachers, brought together by Gwenda Hurst, gathered in the Royal Irish Academy on that afternoon of the 22nd September 1961, the pre-meeting chatter may well have been about the 150 or so recently captured Irish soldiers who had surrendered under Commandant Quinlan to the Katangan forces at Jadotville. More than one of those gathered had experience of living, and indeed teaching, on the African continent, and given the heroics and the current situation of the Irish company at Jadotville, it is easy to imagine the conversations would have revolved around the concern for the company's safety.

By the time the meeting had finished, a new organisation had been proposed. The Association of Geography Teachers of Ireland (AGTI) would see the light of day during that academic year, under the watchful eye of Anthony Farrington, who had chaired that first meeting, and Tom Jones Hughes, who, at the first official meeting of the AGTI in 1962 would become the first President. Both Farrington and Jones Hughes, as well as Hurst, were also members of the Geographical Society of Ireland (GSI). However, the GSI, in its meeting of February 1957, had decided that 'school work was outside the Society's field of action' (Armitage 1981, p. 31). It was this tint that had prompted New Zealand-born Gwenda Hurst to write to a selection of Geography teachers in the Dublin area in 1961, and convene a meeting to establish a committee for the teaching of geography. This committee now took the form of a new association whose aims, as set out in its new constitution of 1962, were fivefold: to discuss aims, methods and curricula and other matters of common interest: to disseminate information about geographical teaching in other countries: to provide opportunities for

co-operation among those in this country interested in geography, and with individuals and similar organisations abroad: to issue a journal and any other publications dealing with the teaching of geography in schools: and the Association shall encourage the formation of local branches (Constitution, 1964).

The emergence of *Geographical Viewpoint*

As per its constitution, the first publication by the new Association, *Journal*, appeared in 1964 (Figure 1), edited by Gerard Fahy. This was clearly an attempt to 'start the ball rolling', with Tom Jones Hughes providing an article on 'The six inches to the mile Ordnance Survey townland map' (reprinted in this volume), H.R. Cathcart of Sandford Park School writing on 'Developing a Geographer's eye' and Daphne D.C. Pochin Mould with a short piece on Iceland. Added to this, there is a complete list of the members of the AGTI as of 1st June 1964, a report on the first field day of the AGTI's Cork centre (to Cork Harbour), five pages of book reviews and a copy of the constitution of the new association. At 32 pages, the *Journal* contains five pages of ads, which obviously aided the production of the publication.

The following year, the *Journal* was revamped under the new title of *Geographical Viewpoint*, edited by Sr M. Clare Grant. It had a new cover designed by the new president, A.R. Orme which aimed to illustrate the relationship between the study of Geography and that of the other sciences (Figure 2). The diagram is important as Orme (1965) used it in the article he wrote in the issue to illustrate how Geography is a science that integrates other sciences and focuses on the regional description. This first 'official'

issue of *Geographical Viewpoint* contains five articles, four of which examine the scope of general aspects of Geography (Physical Geography by A. R. Orme / Human Geography by R.A. Butlin / map work by G.L. Davies / visual illustration in Geography by M. Dillon). The final article is a case study on the Irish Sugar Company. Along with the regular features of book reviews, activities of the year 1964 - 65 and a lengthy editorial (written by M. Turner and J. Griffin) on the state of Geography teaching in Ireland in 1965. Although Sr M. Clare Grant was officially the editor, A.R. Orme became the Academic Editor from 1965 until he retired from the committee in 1972, at a time when he had already spent four years in the US. This role of Academic Editor allowed him to vouchsafe for the academic standards of the journal.

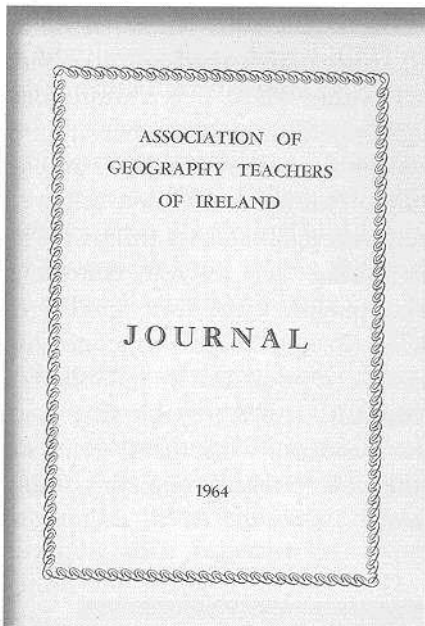


Figure 1: Front cover of Journal (1964), the first publication of the AGTI.

Volumes 1 and 2 each produced five issues, published on an annual basis from 1965 (Volume 1 number 2, the *Journal* being considered Volume 1 number 1) to 1973. From 1974 (Volume 3), a single volume was published annually. 1974

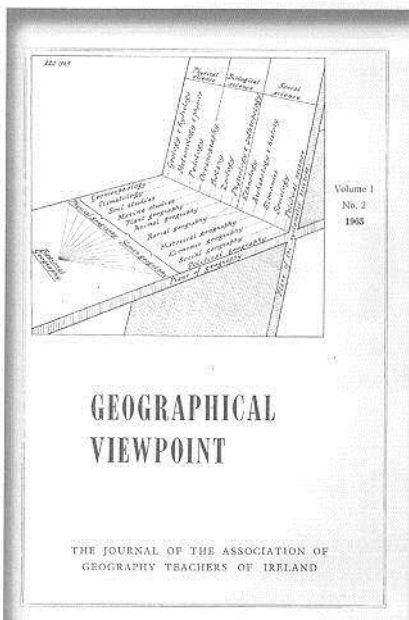


Figure 2: Front cover of the first issue of *Geographical Viewpoint* (1965), with A.R. Orme's illustration of the relationship of Geography and the other sciences on the front cover. This was to remain on the cover until A.R. Orme stepped down as editor.

also saw the introduction of a new cover (Figure 3) which lasted for only one volume and in 1975 was replaced with the map of Ireland that would endure until 1996.

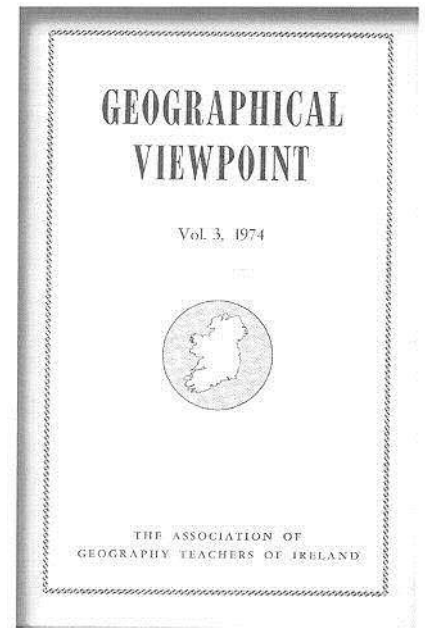


Figure 3: Front cover of *Geographical Viewpoint*, 1974.

From this first edition, *Geographical Viewpoint* continued to flourish. Seven editors have carried the torch of *Geographical Viewpoint* since the years of Orme and Grant (see table 1 overleaf). The content of *Geographical Viewpoint* has varied also over this time, with the various editors bringing their own bias to the journal, while generally focusing on emerging issues in geographic understanding.

The Irish Geography Teacher

In 1975, in view of the changing syllabus at Senior Cycle, a group of teachers got together to produce an informal publication, 'The Irish Geography Teacher' (IGT) which aimed to provide members with 'hot out of the classroom' materials. Initial plans were to produce three IGTs during the year (Armitage 1981). In his Forward to the first issue of November 1975, the AGTI president, Michael Turner, invokes the Irish Geography Teacher as:

“an authentic and first-hand voice of the Geography teacher speaking fresh from his or her experience on the classroom floor. It is to be the medium through which the working Geography teacher can convey without inhibition the efforts, successes, failures, complaints, suggestions, criticisms, obstacles, difficulties, solutions, devices, methods, insights, aids, outcomes that arise from his or her encounter with pupils, within the Geography syllabus, in the actual learning situation. By teachers recording their real experience of teaching Geography, we can offer one another genuine collaboration; we can contribute to the improvement of teaching, raise our professional sights and standards, and attest the educational values that we uphold”. (Turner 1975, p. ii)

Table 1: Editors of *Geographical Viewpoint*

Year	Volume	Editor
1964	1	Gerard Fahy
1965 - 1972	2 - 3	Sr Clare Grant / Anthony R. Orme
1973 - 1982	4 - 11	Des Gillmor
1983 - 1987	12 - 15	Michael Dillon
1988 - 1995	16 - 23	James Walsh
1996 - 2001	24 - 29	Shelagh Waddington
2002 - 2009	30 - 37	Ruth McManus
2010 - date	38 -	Susan Hegarty

Authors for *Geographical Viewpoint*

A list contributors to *Geographical Viewpoint* since the first issue in 1964 reads like the 'who's who' of Geography in Ireland. Researchers, particularly in their early years, have tended to publish their findings in *Geographical Viewpoint*, while more established researchers have given their thoughts on emerging fields of geography. This ties in well with the aim of the journal - that of disseminating the latest research in Geography to teachers in the classroom. Teachers themselves, members of the AGTI, have been at the forefront of contributions to the journal, providing valuable insight and real-life experiences of their work in the classroom. Indeed, 26% of all articles published in the journal between 1964 and 2009 were written by teachers. This figure, however, masks the variation between various editorial styles, with some editors perhaps preferring to source their material from teachers (to whom, at times, they had more access), with others tending to publish articles from academics within Third Level institutions. The editor with the highest percentage of teacher-authors is Michael Dillon, who in his five issues published 7 articles (39%) from the classroom. This figure is closely followed by Shelagh Waddington, who published 16 articles (35%) authored by teachers during her six-year editorship. James Walsh, in contrast, published the least number of teacher-authored articles (2%), although his editorship was the most productive in terms of articles published in the journal (with 55 in total). It is regrettable that more teachers don't share the wonderful work that is going on in the classroom with the wider public through this forum. With this in mind, in the 1980's, the AGTI decided to

The first number of the IGT included a 'facts and figures' section about a European country (in this case Sweden), which would become a regular feature until number 7 in 1977. During these years, with IGT focusing on the classroom application of the subject, *Geographical Viewpoint* focused less on the pedagogical aspects of Geography while it focused more on developments in the discipline and on the challenges being posed to Geography teachers with the advent of the new curriculum.

The IGT, however, was short lived. By 1979, after circa 10 numbers, the IGT had run out of steam, with those charged with gathering material finding it difficult to source sufficient material for subsequent numbers. Thus, what could be a valuable resource to teachers in the classroom was wound down. It may be worthwhile considering if a similar initiative could today be set up within a virtual environment.

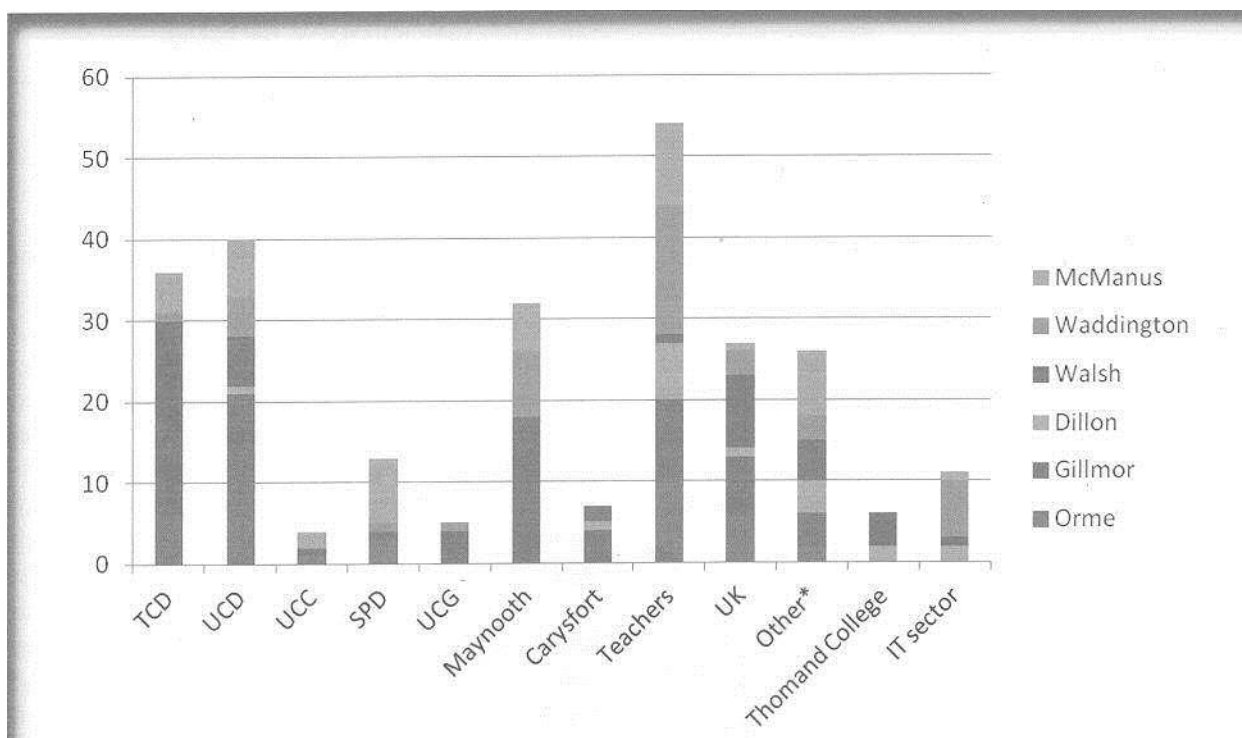


Figure 4: Editors of *Geographical Viewpoint* and the provenance of authors of articles. Source: Compiled from *Geographical Viewpoint* (issues 1 to 37) by the author.

* Other includes both semi-state bodies and overseas contributors.

inaugurate an award for the article in *Geographical Viewpoint* that best enhances teachers performance in the classroom or improves their enjoyment of the subject.

Editors of *Geographical Viewpoint* have experienced that unfortunately at times the flow of articles into the journal is not as one would wish. This is partly because of the dominant position of the Geographical Society of Ireland's journal *Irish Geography* which although catering for a different audience nonetheless has tended to receive more attention than the AGTI journal. Therefore, most editors have encouraged submission of articles from teachers and colleagues. This, to a certain degree, has dictated the provenance of the various articles. Editors with strong links to particular institutions have traditionally sourced material from colleagues in their home institution, as well as from others across the Higher Education spectrum. Thus, for the first editor, UCD's Anthony Orme, 35% of his published articles were by authors within UCD. Other editors have tended to source approximately 20% of their articles from this source. The one noticeable exception to this is Michael Dillon, who while he published two articles from people in Third Level, sourced the majority of his articles from among the members of the AGTI (as mentioned above) and from State bodies (cf. Figure 4).

As mentioned previously, many authors have used *Geographical Viewpoint* as a springboard for their writing skills. Many teachers' first published piece appeared within the AGTI's journal. However, some authors have become frequent visitors on the pages of *Geographical Viewpoint*, bringing their expertise and experience to the readers and fellow members of the AGTI. These include former editors, such as James Walsh (who has published eight articles in *Geographical Viewpoint*) and Shelagh Waddington (with seven, including one in this volume). Other repeat authors include Arnold Horner (six articles), Richard Moles (five articles), Denis Pringle (four articles) and Gerard Fahv (the editor of the very first Journal of the AGTI, who subsequently published eight articles in *Geographical Viewpoint*). However, two authors stand out as exemplars of their commitment to *Geographical Viewpoint* (and by association, the AGTI). These are Ernest Armitage, who to date has published ten articles in *Geographical Viewpoint*, many looking at the history of the AGTI, including one in this volume; and Des Gillmor with an astounding 16 articles. Des Gillmor, of course, was also an editor of the journal, the second after A. R. Orme. Now happily retired from his lecturing post at Trinity College Dublin, Des is planning yet another article for this journal, and we look forward to his 17th in the forthcoming edition.

Developments in *Geographical Viewpoint* over its history

Like every journal, *Geographical Viewpoint* has developed over time. The current edition is a long way from the

Journal which was edited by Fahy in 1964. During this time, there have been two 'special editions', with Volume 15 (edited by Michael Dillon) focusing on development education, and Volume 35 (edited by Ruth McManus) looking at the topic of Europe and the EU and published to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. All other volumes had a balance of academic and practical articles from across the geographic spectrum. The popular Mapwork exercise by Arthur Travers became a feature from volume 24 (with an exercise on Kilkenny). Around this time, under the editorship of Shelagh Waddington, the reports on the individual branches of the AGTI disappeared from the pages of *Geographical Viewpoint* although the Central Branch report existed for some time longer. The Review section also became more focused and reduced in pages, with mainly textbooks being reviewed. With the inauguration of the Gwenda Hurst medal in 1983, presented to the student who scored the highest mark in the Leaving Certificate Geography paper, and the Gwenda Hurst award mentioned above, a report on these also became a regular feature of *Geographical Viewpoint*.

The most obvious development over the history of *Geographical Viewpoint* is its format. Beginning as an A5 booklet, 1995 saw the move to the now-familiar A4 style. The following volume saw the journal also getting a facelift in the form of a new cover. Another, more modern cover design was developed for volume 30 (2002), and it is this design that exists to the present.

Conclusion

The 50th anniversary of the AGTI provides us with a cause of celebration for an association that has been very beneficial to the teaching of Geography in Ireland. One of the vehicles it chose the the outset to do this was through the publication of a journal. This journal, first published in 1964 under the title *Journal* subsequently became *Geographical Viewpoint*. The importance of *Geographical Viewpoint* to the geography teacher over this time cannot be underestimated. The future of the journal will depend on the enthusiasm of the geographic community (understood in the widest sense) embracing again the joy and the challenge of transmitting geography to others.

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