

# 30 Years of the Irish Met Society

by Emily Gleeson, IMS Secretary and Met Éireann

*“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”*

William Butler Yeats

The Irish Meteorological Society (IMS) was founded by Professor Ray Bates on November 9th 1981 and is thus 30 years old this year.

## How did IMS come about?

Ray Bates took leave of absence from Met Éireann in 1964 to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Boston. At that time, all foreign students were assigned to a local family. While at a meal with his ‘local family’, Ray was introduced to Ken Spinder, who was then

the Executive Director of the American Meteorological Society (AMS). AMS had 10,000 members and it was said that Ken knew them all by name. It immediately became obvious to Ray that having a Met Society was extremely beneficial. This meeting with Ken Spinder inspired him to initiate setting up the Irish Met Society in late 1981.

The first IMS AGM was held in February 1982, during which a constitution and rules were adopted and a committee of 12 was elected. The goal of the Society was to attract people from all walks of life who have an interest in meteorology and this still holds today. From the beginning, IMS has held evening lectures,

field trips and one-day meetings/conferences. Audiences have been enlightened on topics ranging from ‘Golfing in the Wind’ to ‘The Middle Atmosphere – Earth’s Ignorosphere’ and all corners of Ireland have hosted the Irish Met Society over the years, with visits to Valentia Observatory, Mace Head Research Station and Armagh Observatory among many others. A full listing of past IMS events can be found on the Society’s website [www.irishmetsociety.org](http://www.irishmetsociety.org).

The Irish Met Society is run by a dedicated committee of volunteers who give some of their free time to the organisation. To date 73 people have served on the committee. So far IMS has had 9



Irish Met Society Photography Competition 2011

**“Burren Rain Storm”**  
Photograph taken by  
Anthony Byrne



Irish Met Society Photography Competition 2011

**“Bundorragha”**  
Photograph taken by  
Kevin Murphy



Irish Met Society field trip to Mace Head, Galway in 1990. Left to right: Dr Aodhagán Roddy, Captain Kilian Tormey, Dr Tony Scott, Dr Tom O’Connor (behind Dr Tony Scott), Evelyn Cusack, Mary Anne Halton, Paul Halton, Jim Hamilton, Alan Hamilton (in front), Patricia Hamilton, Gerard Jennings. Photo by Aidan Kelly.



**(Left)** Irish Met Society field trip to Armagh Observatory in 2008 – Michael Walsh in the background. Photo by Sinéad Duffy. **(Right)** Irish Met Society field trip to Valentia Observatory, 2010, to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of weather observing in Valentia. Photo by Alan Landers.

presidents. Shane Tierney was the first, followed by Aodhagán Roddy, Tony Scott, Peter Lynch, Bill Wann, John Sweeney, Gerald Mills and Ray Bates. Paul Halton is currently in the role. IMS has also had numerous secretaries and treasurers but all members of the IMS committees are equally important. The following is a list of all past and current committee members, in order of the year they first joined the committee:

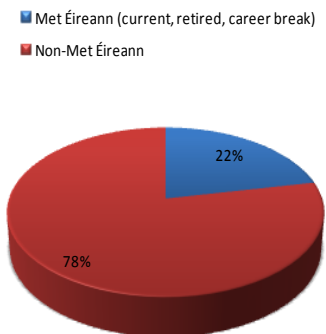
Shane Tierney, Aodhagán Roddy, Ray Bates, Dermot O'Connor, Dick Breen, Peter Lynch, Tony Brereton, P. Flynn, Michael Mansfield, Jim Caughey, A. Morrisroe, Cormac O'Connor, Owen Carton, Jeffrey Gibbs, John Tyrrell, Evelyn Cusack, Jim Hamilton, Joan Blackburn, Seamus Walsh, Gerry McDonald, Michael Connaughton, Shane Finnegan, Tom Sheridan, Peter Bayliss, Tony Scott, Philip Vardon, Aidan Kelly, Steve Browne, Kieran Commins, John Doyle, Gerald Fleming, Margaret Naughton, Sean McCarthy, Michael Joyce, Kilian Tormey, Pat Shannon, Edward Graham, Dermot MacMurrow, Liam Campbell, Paul Halton, Bill Wann, Kyran Dollard, John Flannery, Douglas Gordon, Philomena Stokes, Denis Fitzgerald, John

Sweeney, Michael Cleary, David Downes, Tom O'Connor, Gerald Mills, Joanna Donnelly, Jane Bruton, Cathal Kennedy, Michael Walsh, Klara Finklele, Willemien Phelan, Hugh Daly, John Finnan, Alison Donnelly, Karen Stewart, Sarah O'Reilly, Sinéad Duffy, Liam Burke, Ann-Marie Hickey, Jennifer Hannafin, Keith Lambkin, Morgan Geraghty, John Butler, Emily Gleeson, Dominic Foley, Kilian Harford and Sarah Gallagher.

**Where does IMS stand today?**

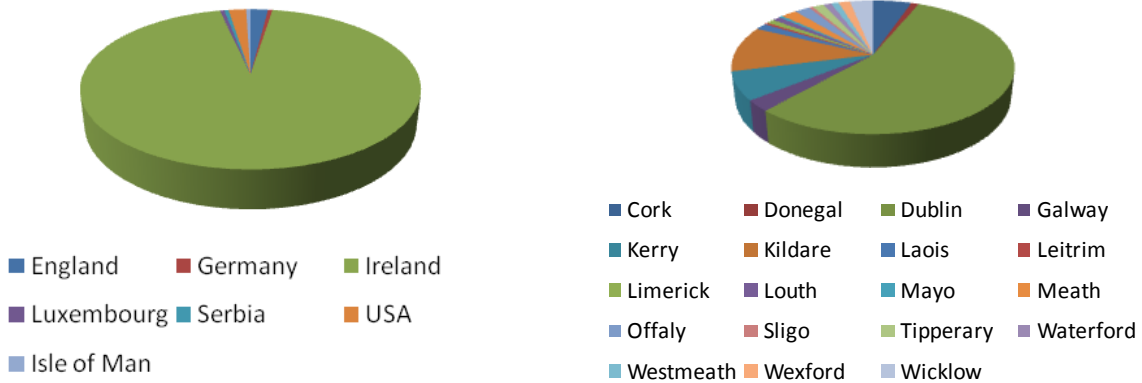
The Irish Met Society has continued to go from strength to strength and has a current membership of just over 200 people. As set out in the original plans, the members still come from all walks of life and include academics, pharmacists, anaesthetists, students, teachers, pilots and many more who share a common love of meteorology. In fact, almost 80% of the membership comes from outside of Met Éireann. While the majority of the members live in Ireland, there are also members from Luxembourg, the USA, the Isle of Man, England, Serbia and Germany. As al-

ways the Society welcomes new members and new committee members.



% of IMS members who work for Met Éireann v non-Met Éireann members.

Geographically, most of the members live in the Greater Dublin Area but this is gradually changing as in 2010 the Society started to podcast (audio) most of the lectures. More recently we have started making video recordings of the lectures. The IMS 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary lecture by Prof. Ray Bates (more information about this on the next page) was the first to be filmed. All of these are available to members when they log into the Member-Only section of the IMS website.



Where IMS members are from -'geographical distribution' pie charts.

Over the past few years IMS has been running photography competitions. Since 2009, we have received approximately 1500 entries. We have also recently started to create a collection of interviews (text and film), with people who work in meteorologically-related jobs, all of which are available on our website.

Last May the Irish Met Society celebrated its 30th anniversary with a lecture by Prof. Ray Bates on "The Greenhouse Effect and Global Warming". The lecture was held in the RDS

and the Society is extremely grateful to Tony Scott for providing their wonderful venue. The Society would like to pay a special word of thanks to Karen Sheeran, RDS, for ensuring that everything ran smoothly on the night.

While 2011 was a celebratory year for the Irish Met Society, it was also a very sad year as Dr Aodhagán Roddy, committee member, passed away. Aodhagán was instrumental in helping Ray Bates to set up IMS in 1981. He was President of the Society for a record number of 7 years in total and was on

the IMS committee for more than half of the Society's 30-year history. Aodhagán played a huge role in IMS in his quiet, unassuming way and will never be forgotten by members who got to know him over the years.

The Irish Met Society dedicated its lecture evening on November 10th 2011 and its 10-day weather exhibition, both marking the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Irish Meteorological Service, to Aodhagán Roddy. We hope he would have been proud of our efforts.



Irish Met Society members, committee members and guests at the IMS 30th Anniversary lecture by Prof. Ray Bates in May 2011. **Front (left to right):** Tony Scott, Emily Gleeson, Paul Halton, Karen Sheeran (RDS), Aodhagán Roddy, Ray Bates, Peter Lynch, Ray Bates' wife Natasha, Anne McWilliams, Kathleen Fitzgerald, Mary Anne Halton. **Back (left to right):** guest, Duncan Stewart, Eugene Kennedy, Eamon Murphy, Gerald Fleming, Denis Fitzgerald, Evelyn Cusack, Dominic Foley, Morgan Geraghty, Kieran Commins, Tom Keane.