

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS delivered by **PROFESSOR JAMES WARD**, NUI, Galway on 26 June, 2009 on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, **ON BRIAN JOYCE**

When Brian Joyce graduated from this University in 1962 with a BA and a BComm, and a year later with a Higher Diploma in Education he could scarcely have imagined the sort of glittering career that lay ahead, recognition of which brings him back to his *alma mater* today to receive an honorary degree.

Brian was born in Headford, Co. Galway and went to Claran and later Shrule primary schools, and from there to St. Mary's College in Galway as a boarder. He came to this University and did his degrees at a time when it was possible for the more industrious student to study for both a BA and a BComm simultaneously, which Brian did. His family entertained the thought of his becoming a teacher and he completed the HDip in Education as an "insurance policy". Incidentally, he did his practice teaching in the Bish and it would be interesting to know who were among his pupils in that year. Had he pursued teaching as a career he would no doubt, have made an excellent school principal. However, the fact that his family thought he might make an excellent teacher did not dissuade Brian from pursuing a career in business.

Following his time in College he was offered a position in Bord na Móna, which he turned down. It would be interesting to speculate how that might have turned out had he accepted, and also to ponder what Eddie O'Connor would be doing today. (Eddie O'Connor was a later Chief Executive of the Bord).

However, in 1963 Bord na Móna was not for Brian and he departed for England where he worked with Ford in Dagenham and simultaneously qualified as an accountant. He describes Dagenham as 'not a nice place to work'. Such was the pollution from the car industry that one arrived to work in a white shirt and returned home with a black one. However, the experience gained in Ford was to stand him in good stead. He returned to Ireland in 1967 to work for RTE for two years, before moving on to Bord Baine (the Irish Dairy Board), where he was to remain for 20 years, making a major impact both in the UK and Ireland.

He spent two years in Dublin with Bord Baine before moving back to England to take over Adams Foods operation on behalf of the Board. His impact there was far-reaching and significant. He radically changed the distribution system from working through agents, to dealing directly with retailers. As a Professor of Marketing, I can appreciate how significant this change was, and the power it gave the Dairy Board to influence the market. During his six years at Adams he built the Company into a diversified food group, marketing not just butter, but cheese and other compatible foods. He established a biscuit division and a fruit juice division, and grew the company from 500 employees to 2,300.

In 1978 he returned to Dublin as Chief Executive of Board Baine in succession to Joe McGeough and Tony O'Reilly. He was to make a major impact on the Boards operations. During Brian's term as Chief Executive, the German market was grown substantially in volume and remains a major market today, importing 25,000 tonnes of butter per annum from Ireland at a premium price, compared to every other butter on the market, including all German butters.

As Chief Executive, he also opened up the Chinese and Russian Commodity markets in 1979. The net worth of the Board increased 16 times during his term as Chief Executive. The board was able to sell its biscuit division and the fruit juice division at significant profits and by the time he left in 1988 the company was worth €100m and turnover was €1b.

When Brian left the Board in 1988 he did not retire. He embarked on a new career, becoming a Board member and Chairman of numerous household name companies including the Education Building Society, Allegro, Irish Life, IDA, Tara Meats, Williams Groups, National Hardware, Celtic Anglian Water, Clancourt Holdings, CIE and the Mater Private Hospital.

He left his mark on all of them, perhaps none more so than on the Mater Private Hospital. As chairman of the Mater Private, he saw its debts of €40m eliminated, and he was eventually one of those who bought out the hospital.

Brian has freely given of his time to many organisations, serving as Council or Board Member of the IMI, CII/IBEC, Coford, and the INPC.

He also served a term as chairman of the Graduates Association of this university and has been an active supporter of the Galway University Foundation for many years. He was the recipient of a Bank of Ireland graduate award for Business from his *alma mater* in 2008.

Praehonorabilis cancellarie, totaque universitas:

Praesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittantur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.