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Staff of the new department

The initial members of the department in 1959 consisted of Mr Hall together with eight mathematicians transferred from other departments.²⁹ The department had the support of a panel of eight visiting lecturers for some of the evening courses. The first member of staff to be appointed to the department with direct experience of computers and computer programming was Dr R.W. Sharp, who was recruited from the de Havilland Aircraft Company in 1959, where he had been employed in the mathematical services division as a programmer/analyst. Mr Hall announced Dr Sharp's appointment in one of his 'Department of Mathematics Memos', No. 3, dated 23 July 1959:³⁰ 'Our new member of staff is R.W. Sharp BSc PhD ARCS, at present working at de Havilland's Mathematical Services Division. His specialist interests are Numerical Analysis and Mathematical Statistics.' Roger Sharp later said that 'It was evident that there was going to be an opportunity for developing computing at the College, and that was really my objective in coming here.'³¹

The primary roles of the department were to teach mathematics to students in the other departments and to conduct most of the mathematics examinations in those departments. However, under the 'inspiring and perceptive leadership'³² of Mr Hall, short courses on subjects of a specialised character were provided by staff of the department, and a series of monthly seminars was initiated. The majority of the seminars were conducted by visiting mathematicians from industry or academia, and both the short courses and seminars were soon well-established regular features of the department. At the first seminar, entitled 'The use of Boolean algebra in the design of switching circuits' and given by Mr Hall on 13 October 1959, he demonstrated a binary adder that technicians at The Polytechnic, Regent Street, had constructed for him. Other seminars included that held on 31 January 1961, 'Non-numerical Applications of Computers', given by Dr Seymour Papert, at that time a member of staff of the Autonomics Division of the National Physical Laboratory (he subsequently moved to MIT), and that held on 5 December 1961, 'Computational aspects of Spectral Analysis', given by Dr Sharp.

In 1960/61 a visiting mathematicians lectureship programme was instituted. At the end of the 1960/61 session a party of 120 sixth-formers, accompanied by staff from 12 schools, spent a day in the college participating in a varied programme aimed at showing the place of mathematics in modern education within science and technology. This was to become an annual event, with over 2,000 pupils participating over the ensuing years.

29. The lecturers transferred from other departments were A.J. Collins, R.D. Johnson, G.E. Morris, G.A. Randall, H. Retkin, B.D. Sharp, J. Stevens and K. Wolfenden.

30. Mr Hall's departmental memos became a frequent and renowned source of information, being produced almost monthly.

31. Interview with Dr Sharp on his retirement, *Horizon*, 47 (July 1991), p. 2.

32. Dr P.W. Kingsford, 'A History of the University of Hertfordshire, 1944-1968', unpublished.