

Philip Rhodes

Philip Rhodes was a postgraduate student of the eminent physicist E C Stoner along with E P Wohlfarth with whom he made several seminal contributions to the theory of magnetism.

In 1963 he published a famous paper with E P Wohlfarth describing how to determine the nature of magnetism in a material, that is, whether the magnetic moments were localised on atoms or whether they were spread out in the electron system. This was an important cornerstone in the theory of magnetism at the time, but the Rhodes-Wohlfarth plot found applicability across the broad field of magnetism and is still used today – in 2021 alone their 1963 paper has been cited by seven publications.

Dr Rhodes was an exceptional teacher, much loved by undergraduates for the clarity of his lectures and his dry sense of humour. Exceptionally for a theoretician, he even taught Experimental Physics in the third year laboratory. In later years Dr Rhodes took great interest in the teaching of Physics and for many years was heavily involved in the administration of examinations. It was he who was despatched to instruct new lecturers in the art of setting examination questions as their first attempts produced problems that were far too difficult for undergraduates.

Dr Rhodes never lost contact with the department and came to all the Christmas parties but more importantly, he was a member of the History Boys (well into his 90s), four former members (with R Jakeways, D Greig and G Brooke) of the department who took it upon themselves to ensure that the history of Physics at Leeds was not forgotten. They curated many artefacts of historical significance not only for the department but for the University collection. Their work occupies a grand display in the School of Physics and Astronomy housed in the newly opened Bragg Building.

Philip and his beloved wife Maggie were leading lights in the former Civic Theatre in Leeds where he trod the boards from time to time and Maggie looked after the wardrobe.