

Never too late for learning

When local man James Knox received his parchment at this week's University of Ulster summer graduation ceremonies in the Millennium Forum, it marked the culmination of many years of part-time study.

The father-of-four from the Culmore Road was awarded a BSc Honours degree in Computer Science (Second Class, Upper Division).

The former Post Office employee, who is now an ICT specialist with the Civil Service in the Western Region, admits he has an insatiable appetite when it comes to learning about computers. He says he has been hooked on learning more about computers ever since the first one was installed in the General Post Office in Derry in the mid '80s.

"At the time I was working as an administration officer and like most people, I knew nothing about computers. I remember everyone standing looking at the computer, not knowing what to make of it."

Realising that computers were going to have a major impact on the workplace, he decided to

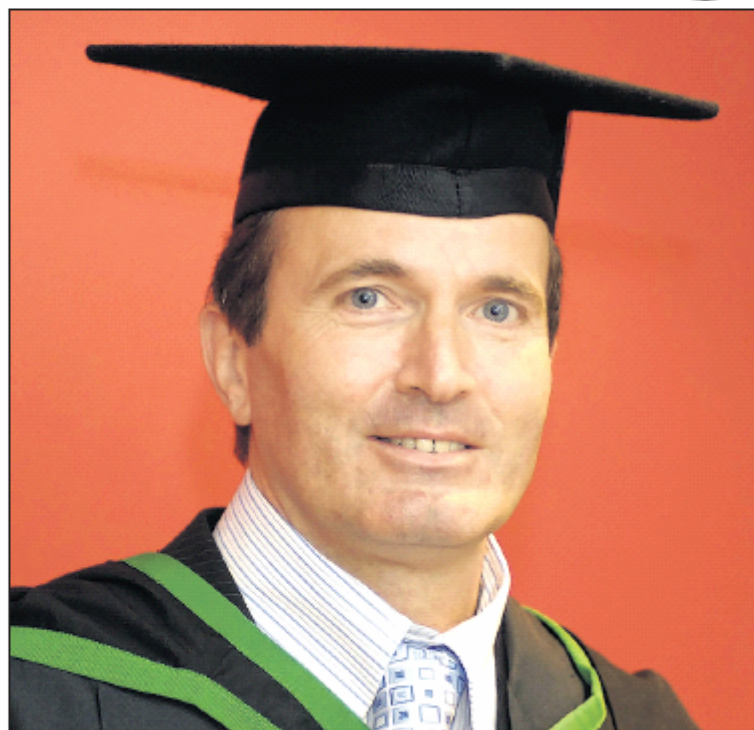
study part-time in the evenings and on a day release basis to learn more about them.

In 1996, James took voluntary redundancy from the Post Office and enrolled on the Foundation course for mature students at Magee. From this he progressed to do a HNC in Electronics and Computing at North West Regional College and a Diploma in Teaching ICT before signing on for a degree in Computer Science at Magee.

With a young family to support, James says he did not have the luxury of studying full time so he went back to work, first with the Ulster Bank, Stream and Civil Service pensions branch before taking up his current post as an ICT specialist.

"Once you stop learning, you fall behind," says James, adding that he has no plans to stop.

"I really enjoy it - in a masochistic sort of way - but it is important to keep up. My qualifications certainly opened doors for me and I'd certainly recommend going back to school. It has been a really positive experience for me."



Father-of-four, James Knox from Culmore, who was awarded a BSc Honours degree in Computer Science (Second Class, Upper Division), from the University of Ulster, Magee campus.