

W. S. Gosset or 'Student'

Guinness Brewer in charge of Statistics

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William Sealy Gosset (alias “Student”) was an immensely talented scientist with many interests, but he is best known for his contributions to modern statistics. Born in 1876 in Canterbury, England, he studied chemistry and mathematics at Oxford. He joined the St James's Gate Brewery of Arthur Guinness, Son & Co., Dublin, in October 1899 as a Junior Brewer in order to assist in the development and application of scientific methods in brewing. He was appointed Brewer in charge of the newly established experimental brewery in 1907 and later established the statistical department, which he ran until 1936. He then transferred to the new Park Royal Brewery in London, where he became the (first) Head Brewer until his death the following year in 1937. His practical work led to important theoretical discoveries in the discipline of statistics, in particular to “Student’s t-test of significance”. However most of Gosset’s time in the brewery was taken up by business matters and the proportion of time he was able to devote to statistical questions was relatively small. In this presentation I intend to highlight the extent and variety of his work at Guinness as the Brewer (i/c) in charge of Statistics.

Biography:

Philip J. Boland is Emeritus Professor of Statistics at University College Dublin, where he has been an academic since 1971. His research interests have included reliability theory, stochastic inequalities, order statistics, functional analysis, statistical education and actuarial science. He is a past President of the Irish Statistical Association, an elected member of the ISI, and an Honorary Fellow of the Society of Actuaries in Ireland.