Grattan-Guinness, Ivor


Ivor Grattan-Guinness is well known for his extended works about French mathematics at the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century in general and the Ecole Polytechnique in particular. This article is mainly based on a former publication [Am. Math. Mon. 112, No. 3, 233–250 (2005; Zbl 1082.01017; ME 2007f.00020)]. In the first sections Grattan-Guinness looks at the founding of the Ecole Polytechnique in 1794, its organisation and its students. He describes the national role of the “new” school and gives some reasons why the school gained such a high reputation in its first forty years. Then he discusses the reforms of the school in 1799–1804, the impact of the revolutions in 1815 and 1830, as well as the criticism of Coriolis and Leverrier in their report of 1840 and 1850 resp. The latter ones are already part of the decline of the school from the 1830s onwards. The extent and cause of the decline are further followed in the following sections on the changing career opportunities for the polytechnicians and on the development in the period 1850–1914. Finally Grattan-Guinness added a new part with some appraisals of the influence of the school in France and outside France. He puts a special focus on the mathematical courses in most parts of the article. A literature review about some older sources but above all about newer publications from 1989 onwards completes that highly informative article.

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Classification: A30 B20

Keywords: Ecole polytechnique; Ecole normale; French educational system

doi:10.1007/978-94-007-2627-7_13