

1086-01-919

**Janet Heine Barnett\*** ([janet.barnett@colostate-pueblo.edu](mailto:janet.barnett@colostate-pueblo.edu)). *Mathematics is a Plural Noun: The Case of Oliver Byrne, Esq.*

Histories of mathematics often focus on major names and developments, as these appear from the perspective of academic mathematics in the historian's own time. Ignored are the 'lesser' practitioners of mathematics who worked alongside the better known names. Yet the activities of lesser lights can reveal aspects of the history of mathematics otherwise hidden from view. This talk casts a spotlight on one such figure: the elusive Oliver Byrne, Esq. (c1810-1875).

A self-educated engineer, self-proclaimed mathematician and prolific technical author of Irish heritage, Byrne is most remembered for his beautiful 1847 'Euclid by Colour.' His other publications suggest Byrne himself would rate his contributions to computational practice to be of even greater merit. He took particular pride in his 'Dual Arithmetic,' a system of computation that he initially proclaimed to 'entirely supersede the use of logarithms' and later developed into an elaborate system of 'dual logarithms.'

This talk surveys Byrne's mathematical works and their reception within the increasingly stratified community of 19th century British mathematical practitioners. In particular, we consider De Morgan's opinion of Byrne's work and reflect upon what it reveals about professional mathematics at the time. (Received September 16, 2012)