

# University honour for 98-year-old Paddy

[Dec 15 2011](#) by Jamie Bowman, [Crosby Herald](#)

COLONEL James Graeme ‘Paddy’ Bryson has led an extraordinary life.

Now the 98-year-old former High Court Judge can add another achievement to his long list of accolades as he is honoured at the University of Liverpool’s graduation ceremony this week.

The Colonel, known as Paddy to his friends, is being made an honorary doctor of law, more than 80 years after he first attended the university as a student.

“When I first went to university, nobody went and all you had to do was turn up,” said Col Bryson.

“They were very pleased to see you!”

One of Formby’s most distinguished figures and a longtime resident in Hightown, Col Bryson’s unbelievable career has seen him serve as a soldier, lawyer, judge, academic author and prominent Catholic.

Col Bryson’s military career began in 1936, when he was commissioned into the Territorial Army by King Edward VIII. He went on to become a distinguished soldier and in 1952 was made commanding officer of 626 (Liverpool Irish) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery.

Col Bryson was only 34 years old when he was asked to be a judge and ended up sitting for over 30 years, acting as a High Court judge well into his seventies.

It was during this period that probably the most remarkable moment in Col Bryson’s long career occurred, when in 1960 he became the only High Court judge to be shot at in court.

“The man in question ran most of the nightclubs and brothels in Liverpool and one year he had not filled out an income tax form,” said Col Bryson.

“I was the bankruptcy judge at the time and told him I had no choice but to declare him bankrupt.

“The next thing he had brought out a pistol and shot at me before shooting the official receiver in the stomach.

“Luckily the next three bullets were bad and I was able to tackle him to the ground.

“I was an officer and I rather regarded him as an recalcitrant sergeant who needed putting in his place.

“It never occurred to me that I could be killed.”

His bravery earned him a Queen's Order for brave conduct, which now hangs on his wall alongside pictures of Col Bryson with the Pope, the Queen and his great friend Ken Dodd.

Of all his many achievements and titles, which include being made an OBE, Col Bryson is most proud of the role he played in bringing together the Catholic and Anglican Bishops in his position as a Catholic member of the Lord Mayor's Remembrance Day Committee.

"I take real pride that I stood out for many years for the right for Catholics to attend the Remembrance Day Service.

"I made my own position quite clear to the Archbishops and they never tried to stop me and in the end they seemed quite grateful."

Professor Kelvin Everest, University of Liverpool pro-vice chancellor and public orator, said: "Graeme Bryson has, through a long and immensely rich life, been at the heart of civic society on Merseyside. His legal experience, significant as it was, forms only one aspect of an extraordinary multi-faceted career which has been sustained right up to the latter part of his tenth decade.

"We take great pride in honouring him this week."