

## Recollections 2

ALAN TAMMADGE

'So you're reading mathematics. What on earth do you talk about?'. I expect we have all heard something like this. It is not easy to answer, is it? Certainly my tutors and lecturers did not feel it necessary to talk *about* mathematics. How is it that a quadratic equation, the sine formula, taking moments about the point of contact with the floor, associativity all belong to mathematics while the formula for the time of swing of a pendulum does not? Even Margaret Thatcher, opening the Mathematical Association Centenary Conference in London in 1971 could not find anything more gripping to start with than stating that 1729 can be expressed as the sum of two cubes in two different ways!

Our conferences and meetings were always good fun but memorable remarks were few. At this moment I can recollect only one: it was the advice of Edith Biggs to Primary School Teachers, 'If you feel panic, sit down on the floor!' So for some 'human interest' for this most significant issue of the *Gazette* my mind turns to peripheral events. The 1963 Conference was held in Nottingham. My chosen outing was a visit to a colliery near Mansfield. There were about twenty of us. We thought miners' helmets a bit superfluous but changed our minds as we trudged the mile or so from the bottom of the shaft to the coal face. The roof supports seemed to have been designed for five-foot-sixers and without protection many of us would have been speedily laid out. The miners' proprietorial pride in their pit and their concern to explain their work in full detail reminded me strongly of my service in the Royal Navy and the attitude of sailors to their ship. It made the bitterness of subsequent struggles in the industry very understandable. How different their lives. The cream of the mathematics teaching profession was black from head to toe even without having lifted a finger to do any work. Luckily pithead showers deliver gallons of water per second and unlimited quantities of sweet tea washed the coal from our mouths and throats.

In 1978 we were in Bath, literally, since we had received permission to take the waters of *Aquae Sulis* by immersion. Undressing on a stone floor behind stone pillars with our ladies a few yards away behind their own pillars had its moments. So did plunging into barely tepid, unpleasant tasting water. However it was worth it to mark the interplay of distinguished mathematical heads and white bodies in the murk. Afterwards fountains gushed and chandeliers glittered in the Pump Room as Hersees, Quadlings, Maxwells, Tammadges, etc. tried to make sense of the phenomenon. No, I don't think we succeeded!

I joined the Mathematical Association in 1938 as a student in the Mathematical Sixth Form at Dulwich College. Also in the form was one Bryan Thwaites. I started my degree in 1947 and was rapidly recruited into the New Pythagoreans by John Backhouse. In 1951 I rejoined the

Mathematical Association and now find myself an Emeritus Vice-President. As I look at thirty eight bound volumes of the *Gazette* plus a few recent bundles tied with string I can only say how much I have enjoyed myself and echo '*Tibi creditum debes*'.

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**Peter Reynolds** graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1954. He taught in Birmingham before moving to teacher training in 1966. From 1976 to 1990 he was Mathematics Adviser for Suffolk. He joined the Association in 1961 and was the first Editor of *Mathematics in School* (1970-1976). A member of both the Cockcroft Committee and the National Curriculum Mathematics Working Group, he has served on various committees and was President for 1989-90. His first *Gazette* article in 1970 reflected his interest in the use of calculators in schools. His other interests include watching cricket, travelling and listening to traditional jazz.

**Sir Bryan Thwaites** was a Wrangler at Cambridge in 1944 and went on to research in fluid dynamics at the National Physics Laboratory and Imperial College, London. In the fifties he taught for a while and by 1959, when he became a Professor of Mathematics at Southampton, he wanted to up-date school mathematics. The result was his instigation of the School Mathematics Project. His activities in the public domain increased dramatically after his appointment as Principal of Westfield College, London and he has served as chairman or member of many different bodies, mostly in education and the NHS. An honorary member of the Association, he still enjoys simply-stated yet intractable mathematical problems.

**Bertha Swirlew (Lady Jeffreys)** was a Scholar at Girton College, Cambridge in 1921 and a Wrangler in 1924. Her PhD in Quantum Mechanics was earned in 1928, under R.H. Fowler. After 5 years at the University of Manchester she returned to Girton in 1938, retiring in 1969. Her publications include a book which stayed in print for 46 years: *Methods of mathematical physics*, co-written with her husband Harold Jeffreys. She first attended the Annual Meeting of the Association in 1931 and was a Member of Council in the 1930s and President 1969-70. Her main outside interest is music, especially playing the cello and the piano.

**Alan Tammadge** joined the Association as a student in 1938 and completed the Tripos at Emmanuel College, Cambridge in 1950. His books include *Complex Numbers*, contributions to *SMP Books 1-5* and *Parents' guide to school mathematics*. His teaching career includes spells at Sandhurst, Dulwich College, Abingdon School, Magdalen College School and Sevenoaks School, the latter two as Head. He enjoys music, gardening and family history. He first wrote for the *Gazette* in 1964 and was President 1978-79.