

and Karen Parshall for their help in suggesting sources of photographs.

The cover picture for this issue was produced by Nick Mee of Virtual Image Ltd. I asked him for a knot design based on the pentagon motif used in the Mathematical Association crest, which has been restored to the front cover, along with capital letters last used in 1966.

The task of editing the *Gazette* is made much easier by the many people who help behind the scenes. The volunteers who write reports on articles for me and offer advice to contributors are too numerous to mention here, but I would like to thank them for their efforts. The proof-readers, Colin Davis and Keith Barnett and the indexer, Ernest Long are rarely mentioned; their assistance is invaluable. Mike Farrell, Claire Oliphant and the staff at Leicester Printers are unfailingly helpful, as are the staff at Association Headquarters. Finally, both Bill Richardson and I both owe a debt of gratitude to our families for their patience and forbearance. I would therefore like to finish by thanking my wife Barbara, daughters Katherine and Helen and Krys Richardson for their contributions to this special issue.

STEVE ABBOTT

## Producing the *Gazette*

When Steve asked if I would make a contribution to this issue I hesitated, and then, as usual, said 'Yes'. Looking back, I suppose I inherited my link with the MA from my father (identical name and hair 'style' but older!). I have no idea when he joined but the earliest *Gazettes* on my shelves date from 1955. I have just been browsing through these:— Editor T. A. A. Broadbent, cost 5s 6d (27½p). Among the names of the contributors are D. A. Quadling, E. C. Zeeman, T. J. Fletcher and many others. There are as many names as appear in the *Gazette* under the present editor. It is likely that, even allowing for the four issues, the total number of pages in 1955 was about 350, well short of the 640 in 1995. But what about the quality? I leave it to others to respond to that question!

Whilst I have been a member for some 30 years I only became 'active' in 1985. The precise dating is because that was the year the annual conference was in Dundee. I went because I felt it would never come closer and have been to all the conferences since. I have tried to help the Association in different ways but it is in my role as 'Production Editor' rather than any other Association activity (present or impending) that I write this. I do not know enough about 'traditional printing methods' to do more than speculate on the processes which went on in making a *Gazette* in 1955 or earlier. I expect that it was a very involved process with typed copy, possibly retyped etc, with mathematical notation written in – considerably different to the process which resulted in the *Gazette* in your hands as you read this.

The current system, begun by Nick MacKinnon but now developed

somewhat further, is computer based. Nick sent his material to the printers as camera-ready-copy but we currently send it on disc. (We are not yet at the stage of using e-mail, but who knows?) But I run ahead. The items for an issue of the *Gazette* are viewed by Steve and some months ahead I get the material – there is already much done for the other two 1996 issues. Most of the material comes on paper. Occasionally it is hand-written which means I have to get my two fingers tapping. Good, clean printed copy can be scanned, put through optical character recognition software and then checked over and extra symbols and mathematical layout dealt with. At present, OCR software will produce output which has the whole range of ‘keyboard characters’ but excludes many mathematical symbols (perhaps that will come). However, even better than good, clean hardcopy are the items which arrive on disc. On rare occasions I do get ones which use the same software as I use but I am becoming increasingly adept at accessing files on most discs. As the reader will appreciate, this speeds up the process considerably and means that only the ‘mathematical bits’ have to be done manually. Whichever of these processes is used, once an item is typed up, a copy is sent to Steve for an initial check. His rulings are obeyed and the item is filed until the issue is put in order. At this stage the draft version is sent to the ‘readers’, Colin Davis and Keith Barnett, who pay particular attention to matters of style, consistency and so forth. Final checks are then made and ‘postscript’ files are produced. These are put onto a SYQUEST disc cartridge (42Mb) which is formatted for access by an Apple Mac. They are then sent to the printers. It is just the disc which is sent – no hardcopy. Within ten days or so, an ozoloid proof goes to the editor, We hope that we will reach the stage when this proof copy requires no action but so far have had to re-do one or two pages which go as separate files on a 3½ inch DOS disc. A couple of weeks or so later, the first issues arrive and the mailing house starts its work.

I hope these musings are of some interest to readers. A list of the equipment which I use is included in the appendix and I would be pleased to hear any reactions. How this production process will evolve is extremely hard to say. One wonders about CD Roms or e-mail but ...

#### *Appendix*

Basic Platform	Acorn RISC PC600 (9 Mb RAM, 420 Mb hard drive)
Peripherals	Flatbed scanner, external cartridge disc drive, laser printer
Software	TechWriter Professional (v 2.18) DrawPlus (for diagrams) Sleuth2 (OCR package) Various packages to deal with other disc formats and file types.

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