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## *A century of the Gazette*

ROY ASHLEY

A century of publishing under the same title is a very considerable achievement for any journal. The manner in which *Gazette* editors have kept up with the times in content whilst retaining much of its traditional style is much to be admired. The *Mathematical Gazette* offers a unique embodiment of the work of the Association over the greater part of its history. Within the *Gazette* we meet so many of the great names of our profession and gain a sense of affinity with them. Above all we may gain a sense of community with mathematicians and teachers across distance and time through the medium of mathematics.

The *Gazette* offers a unique blend of mathematics problems, opinions and reviews leavened by the humour of the 'gleanings', all characterised by high quality writing and presentation. Over the century, hundreds of contributors have given freely of their time and expertise to share their enthusiasm and understanding.

A succession of excellent editors have made the task look easy. For all that they *appear* to have done is cajoled members into sending their mathematical and pedagogic thoughts, chosen those which provide sufficient breadth, depth and coverage for each edition and arranged for typesetting, printing and circulation. In fact articles are rarely ready for publication when they first arrive on the editor's desk. A little judicious primary editing, invisible even to the original author, may be sufficient but more often the editor offers advice and guidance so that authors may increase their intelligibility quotient. The editor is of course held solely responsible for all mathematical errors and failing to publish the most important articles of the decade that arrive on his desk each week!

For many members the length of a run of the *Gazette* on their shelves acts as a physical measure of their professional life. Few will not have found a problem or two that provides a measure of their mathematical limits! It is not unusual to be defeated by an impossible problem only to find a solution in the next issue provided by a fourteen-year-old. It would be an interesting study to find out which of our younger contributors over the last century

eventually made their names as mathematicians and teachers.

In this special issue, a celebration of 100 years of the *Gazette*, the editor, Steve Abbott, has brought together new articles in the traditional style. Many of our foremost contributors have taken the opportunity to write on matters close to their hearts. Whether they be pieces of criticism, of history, of mathematics or of polemic. I am sure you will enjoy reading the articles as much as the authors have enjoyed writing them and that our special edition will take its honoured place as :

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## Editorial

The preparation of this issue has been a labour of love. I began in 1994 by approaching past Presidents of the Association and prominent mathematical writers with a request for contributions. I had surprisingly few refusals and even fewer who failed to deliver the promised articles. This reliability was more than a little problematic since I had over-ordered. I even responded to one apologetic former President with grateful thanks for a shorter than expected article.

This commemorative issue contains three special sections which have forced the exclusion of all book reviews. The opening section is concerned with the *Gazette* in particular and the Mathematical Association in general. Biographies of the contributors are scattered through this and the other sections. The next section deals with developments in Mathematics during the *Gazette's* history. It is not possible to cover all advances in the subject, and many important branches had to be left out. The resulting selection reflects the interests of those I approached. The extract from Jean Dieudonné's book *Mathematics – the music of reason* is an attempt to cover some of the neglected topics. The third special section consists of articles on the teaching of Mathematics – partly looking back and partly looking forward.

The remaining articles and notes are intended to be more representative of the regular *Gazette* style. Many of the authors wrote by invitation, which is unusual for the *Gazette* but otherwise I selected works by those 'old hands' whose work has graced the pages over the years.

The many photographs in this issue were culled from a variety of sources. I would like to thank Paul Halmos and the American Mathematical Society for allowing me to reproduce a number of photographs from Paul's book *I have a photographic memory*; Springer-Verlag for granting permission to use photographs from their publications and The London Mathematical Society for photographs from its archive. I must also thank Don Albers, Chandler Davis, John Fauvel, Dennis Lindley, Susan Oakes