

Maths without . . .

ATM Easter Conference 2006

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We are third year primary trainee teachers at the University of Northampton and felt compelled to write having just returned home bursting with enthusiasm from attending our first ATM conference. We booked to attend after one of our tutors recommended it as a valuable experience and would just like to take this opportunity to thank all the wonderful people we met for ensuring that we had a truly unforgettable experience.

We were a little apprehensive, both over the reception that we would receive and over the final outcome. On reading the description for each of the workshops and discovering that many were run by tutors and authors of books that we have quoted within our assignments for university, we felt a little in awe and inferior, not to mention the fact that these may be beyond our mathematical knowledge. How wrong we could have been! We felt just as involved as every other person attending and our opinions and thoughts were equally valued.

We received such a warm welcome on arrival and every person that we met was so friendly and approachable that we really felt part of the ATM community. The conference team and especially Karen Gladwin welcomed us with warmth and friendship. She guided us in the right direction and made sure that we were in the right place at the right time. This kind hospitality continued throughout the four days whether we were attending a workshop, in the restaurant, or taking part in the many social events. Everyone at the conference wore a badge with their name along with the region of the country they were from. This was a good discussion point, especially at the dinner table. Everyone was interested to know who you were and what you did and there always seemed to be someone who knew of what you were doing or someone associated. We met many members of ATM, many of whom we are sure to meet within our future careers. The encouraging aspect of this was that all the members were interested in you. The knowledge and experience was there to be shared whether you were very new or had been attending the conferences since the 1960s.

Although very new to the teaching world, we felt that our opinions were valued and encouraged. We attended sessions alongside great mathematicians; however, we felt very much part of a team and felt confident enough to contribute. We have gained so much inspiration from just four days that our mathematics lessons of the future will look very different. We gained so many ideas; too many to write about individually.

The organisation of the event was excellent with comfortable accommodation, fabulous food, varied and engaging entertainment, wonderful conference facilities and engaging speakers and workshop leaders.

The conference for us was about old and new friends getting together to share their ideas and hopes for the future teaching of mathematics, from foundation stage through to KS5 and beyond. As students, the wealth of knowledge gained from others' experiences of the teaching field is amazing. We now plan to spread the word at our university about how exciting and inspirational the conference was for us as well as the insights we gained, in the hope of encouraging new attendees next year.

Attending the conference was one of the best decisions we have made. We met so many influential, interesting and knowledgeable people whose advice and hints we will definitely take into our own classrooms in September. We would thoroughly recommend that the conference be firmly fixed in the diaries of every teacher and trainee teacher with an interest in mathematics. It will certainly feature regularly as part of our continuing professional development and we look forward to next year.

Julie Millard

Lindsay Taylor

Teacher Trainees at The University of Northampton