Gill died suddenly on 11 November 2005. Those at her funeral included people from all over the country and from overseas who had worked with her in the field of mathematics education. Some of you will know Gill as one of the pillars of ATM for over 30 years, but her professional life extended much wider right up to the time she died. Only a week before her death she was at an AQA Mathematics panel meeting, reviewing the next round of AS papers. She continued to carry out research after she retired from Manchester Metropolitan University and at BCME 2005 she ran a seminar with Paul Andrews and Judy Sayers about their latest European study. Paul has worked with her closely for nearly 20 years and he recalls spending many weeks with her in different parts of Europe, finding out more about effective methods of teaching mathematics. Paul writes: “I smile as I recall just how well she knew me; without making it obvious she always found ways of mollifying my fear of flying by keeping the conversation flowing at those moments of maximum tension. The image of her knitting while keeping me calm is as clear today as it was the very first time we flew to Budapest more than ten years ago.”

Gill started her teaching career in a girls’ school in Irlam and moved into teacher training in the early seventies when the ‘Manchester group’, which included among its members Derek Woodrow and John Savin, first made itself felt at ATM conferences. A few years later Gill, with David Cain, founded the Greater Manchester branch of ATM. Gill always had the energy, commitment and enthusiasm to gather a group of people around her and get them working together. The first publications she produced for ATM: These have worked for us at A-level (1984) and These have also worked for us at A-level (1985) were a result of a group of teachers (several of whom were at Gill’s funeral) meeting regularly in her living room. And a few days before she died she was working on a new ATM publication Reaching the core of AS Mathematics, which is taking the ideas from these earlier books and updating them for the 21st century.

Gill was a creative mathematician who had the gift of inventing activities that help people to learn mathematics. She published teaching material for five-year-olds through to post-graduates. She strove to find ways of writing about the mathematics that would help learners make sense of the situation for themselves.

But while Gill is mainly familiar to some members of ATM because of her recent publications and seminars at ATM conferences, her involvement with ATM was a lot more than that. She was Honorary Secretary of ATM, alongside Christine Shiu as Chair, between 1986 and 1989. We were members of General Council at the time and found them an impressive pair, who confronted the issues ATM was facing at the time with great determination. They ensured that we faced up to what was necessary, but always did it with a great sense of humanity making members of General Council and of the Association feel that there was business to be done but we were doing it because of what we believed about mathematics and children and teachers.

And what of Gill herself? Gill was a gifted mathematician, an exciting teacher and an inveterate collaborator: she liked nothing better than to gather round her a group of people and start to work on something. She always had a clear vision and lots of ideas and was not afraid to challenge others. In the address at her funeral the parish priest spoke of her ‘questioning faith’: he always thought carefully about what he said in his sermons because he was “not allowed to get away with anything”. When talking to fellow professionals, if Gill thought that what you wanted to do would not help learners to think about mathematics then she would say so.

ATM is the poorer without Gill’s commitment, flair and energy, but her work lives on. In the next issue of MT there will be a special feature bringing together a range of Gill’s ideas for primary and secondary classrooms, so that today’s teachers can continue to benefit from her work.

Barbara and Derek Ball

You can read more about Gill Hatch and write about your memories of her on the ATM website at www.atm.org.uk/people/gill-hatch.html
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- Easter conference, which brings together teachers interested in learning and teaching mathematics, with excellent speakers and workshops and seminars led by experienced facilitators.
- Regular e-newsletters keeping you up to date with developments in the learning and teaching of mathematics.
- Generous discounts on a wide range of publications and software.
- A network of mathematics educators around the United Kingdom to share good practice or ask advice.
- Active campaigning. The ATM campaigns at all levels towards: encouraging increased understanding and enjoyment of mathematics; encouraging increased understanding of how people learn mathematics; encouraging the sharing and evaluation of teaching and learning strategies and practices; promoting the exploration of new ideas and possibilities and initiating and contributing to discussion of and developments in mathematics education at all levels.
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