As Editor you are often ‘at the whim of’ contributors, and sometimes articles arrive that seem to complement one another, or seem to be contemporary. This can be said of this issue of MT. As this journal arrives on your doorstep you will be thinking about how you are to vote in the referendum on Proportional Representation. Thomas Colignatus – The Referendum on PR – has written an article on how this might be a topic for the mathematics classroom. In it he is not very complimentary about the AV system proposed for the UK. Were you aware there were other ways of organising the system? Might your students be interested in deciding which system seems to be the most appropriate? Why have the government chosen AV?

In this issue we have several articles that focus directly on events in real classrooms, as you might hope and expect. Colin Foster provides two offerings – Marking Time and Small is beautiful after all. The first explores the old problem of marking and how much time should be devoted to this task, and what indeed is ‘constructive’, or positive marking. Colin explores the myths that abound that marking mathematics is just concerns ticks and crosses. In his second piece Colin shows how sometimes a small graph might give a more accurate answer than a larger version of the graph.

Another article that provides a glimpse into the classroom is In ‘the know’ about money by Valerie Quashie and Hannah Golamgouse-Toraub – which examines how two teachers attended a course – then took the ideas back to their classroom – setting up a virtual learning environment for students to follow up the work they had been doing in class.

After completing the editorial process I wanted to put Michael de Villiers – Simply Symmetric and Peter Mitchell – The Euler Line – together to think about, and discuss their contributions. Each takes an opposing stance – with Michael very firmly in the camp of a modern approach to proof in geometry, using symmetry, and Peter with a more traditional approach.

Paul Drijvers – From ‘work-and walk-by’ to ‘sherpas’at-work’ – analyses the ways in which teachers operate when they are using computers in the classroom to support learning. You might like to consider which of the described styles is or might be, your preferred ‘modus operandi’.

The second offering from Tobias Eveleigh – Too many straws – identifies a real problem with the teaching of calculation that is prevalent in Ugandan – that of reducing the arithmetic operations to simple counting exercises. In MT221 he gave us an insight into the work he had been doing as a volunteer in – Ugandan mathematics: an unsolvable problem – and in this article he continues to offer further revealing insights. This struck an immediate chord for me, since I have recently been working with teachers in South Africa. The teachers were only taught arithmetic under apartheid, but now are expected to teach across the full mathematics curriculum. So many misconceptions become evident as teachers struggle to come to terms with the curriculum and so many obvious gaps in their personal mathematical knowledge and understanding. Working in a developing country can be a rewarding task, but it does require both patience, and hard work.

I did worry that we had too few articles for the primary phase, but this is also dictated – to a degree – by chance, we do need more primary contributors. Ho Young and Chen Lu Pien have taken a hard look at subtraction in ‘The Crutch’ – I hope their analysis will prove enlightening. Bernard Bagnall – Consecutive numbers – tells us of an ‘rich’ activity he has used countless times, and gives some ideas about getting started; and Jenny Murray – Curious number – provides us with a photocopiable resource for the classroom that can either be used as such, or introduced as you wish without photocopying.

As always we have a clutch of mathematical articles for those who wish to keep your brains sharp. Paul Stephenson – Two men with a problem – gives us two problems to keep us entertained; and Derek Ball – Starting with MT – tells of how an article in a previous journal led him to do a great deal of mathematics – that still continues.

A branch meeting in Avon – sent in by two attendees gives us a flavour of what happens in one branch. What do you do at your branch meetings? Do you belong to a branch? Is there one near you? Would you like to start up a branch and meet with others to discuss both mathematics and the teaching of mathematics? There is branch information on the web. www.atm.org.uk

Finally, in this issue we have Robin Stuart’s obituary – it is always sad when a valued colleague dies. Robin worked with the two previous editorial teams. I was involved with him when I chaired the editorial committee at GC meetings. Robin was a very sharp individual who contributed much to discussions on the ways forward for the journal. Indeed, I would have liked Robin to stay on the team when I took over the role of editor. His editing skills, and especially his proof reading, were second to none. It seems so inadequate to say that he will be missed.

Margaret Jones
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