When I was asked if I would consider standing for GC, I was eager to be involved, though not a little frightened. I have been a member of ATM since 2009, and have managed to attend three out of four conferences since then. (I actually just counted on my fingers to verify that there were indeed four conferences between 2009 and 2012: fences and fenceposts!) I had always thought General Council was comprised of the most experienced and knowledgeable mathematics educators; people who have published more books than I have read. I doubted how I might be of any value to the organisation. On reflection, this really was a ridiculous concern. The principle that all contributions are valued runs through all of my experiences of ATM, particularly at conference. It has continued to impress me how collaboratively groups of ATM members work. Thinking it through, why wouldn’t General Council operate in the same fashion?

My first General Council meeting was in May, a few weeks after the conference. Working together on some mathematics on the train up to Derby was a real highlight. Jayne and Karen impressed me by deftly and expertly folding paper into beautiful polyhedra, something I’ve never had the patience for. I worked with John on a mechanics problem which had been bothering me for some time.

The ATM offices are situated on an industrial estate a short walk from Derby train station. Each weekend we discuss a ‘Big Issue’ on the Saturday morning. This meeting’s issue was ‘Branches’, and the office was buzzing with many of the branch coordinators as well as members of General Council. It was clear there was a lot of history on this particular issue, and it was a good thing that we were all sitting down to talk about it. Branches are a vital part of ATM, as most members do not attend conference and the branch meetings are one of their main links with the organisation. We listed ways General Council might be able to further develop the work of the branches, and how branches could support one another. I am confident the meeting will result in better opportunities for ATM members to meet and discuss issues surrounding mathematics and mathematics education.

The Saturday afternoon was spent in working groups, and as a new member I was afforded the luxury of speed dating through all the working groups. I think I gained a particularly interesting perspective, as some of the working groups were discussing the same issue, but in the light of their particular responsibility. A key point for all working groups seemed to be increasing membership, whether it was related to conference and branches, member discounts for publications, or retaining NQT members particularly after conference. After a long day, Saturday evening was a real treat. A delicious dinner followed by mathematics! Kevin gave us a delightful task to colour the faces of: eight small cubes such that they could make a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ cube showing all red or all green, then 27 small cubes such that they could make a $3 \times 3 \times 3$ cube showing all red, all green or all blue, then 64 cubes and four different colours etc. I actually took that problem to the Cheltenham MathsJam, where it was equally successful: surely a sign of a good task! MathsJam is an international phenomenon (I might be using phenomenon a little strongly here) where people gather informally in the pub on the penultimate Tuesday of every month to do mathematics. You can find out if there is one in your area at the website www.mathsjam.com

Sunday morning was a slightly more formal meeting concerned with the business of the organisation. There were many decisions to be made, and I was very pleased to be involved and find that not only was my opinion valued, it was actively sought!

More mathematics on the train home - John and I derived the formula for Spearman’s Rank Correlation Co-efficient using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient and the standard result from the sum of the first $n$ squares.

I am looking forward to the next GC meeting in October. Our ‘Big Issue’ will be publications, and I know I am going to enjoy looking at previous publications while we consider what makes something an ATM publication. I suspect at least some of our conversation will be concerned with the recent government proposals around reform of KS4 qualifications http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/gcses/b00213896/ks4-qualification. 10 December 2012 is the deadline for responses, ATM is preparing a response so do send your thoughts to the ATM office.

Jocelyn D’Arcy jocelyndarcy@atm.org.uk

Members of GC 2012-2013
Alison Clark-Wilson, Tony Cotton, Jocelyn D’Arcy, David Lawrence, Lynne McClure, Joe Murray, Sue Pope (chair), Andrew Roberts, Jayne Stansfield, Ruth Tanner, Vivien Townsend, John White, Karen Wintle, Liz Woodham, Kevin Young.
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