

From Coasting to Commanding – a President's mathematical journey

Professor Paul Glaister CBE – MA President 2025-2026



My life and associated mathematical journey have been punctuated by many lucky breaks and opportunities. I mention some of these here as I share with you details of my background and career which has culminated in becoming your new President.

School

If I cannot remember much about the mathematics we were taught in primary school apart from measuring the circumference and diameter of various circular objects and tabulating their ratios, and practising many questions for the 11+ exam, including calculations involving pounds, shillings and pence. I recall our class watching the 1969 moon landing – little did I realise that some serious mathematics and computation was needed to achieve this endeavour.

Luckily, I passed the 11+ exam which meant I could join King Edward VI Grammar School (for boys)

in Bury St Edmunds (founded in 1550), although at the time I wasn't aware that this would continue as a grammar school for only two more years. This was my earliest experience of politicians - local, regional or national - making policy decisions on life-changing education matters, although it is only over the last 10 years or so that I have become acutely aware of the wide-ranging powers that they wield.

We moved to the site of the pre-existing boys' and girls' secondary modern schools and merged with them to form King Edward VI Upper School, a co-educational comprehensive. Despite the discontinuation of my grammar school journey, I was very fortunate because we took many teachers with us - or should I say they took us with them. We were kept together in the 'top'/D stream, and I was fortunate to be in D1, the 'top' set of around 15 in total. I am 100% confident that, had I been a school student now, I would not end up accomplishing anywhere near what I feel I have, or end up being in the position I am in today in writing this as your MA President.

At the grammar school our mathematics teacher (a PE specialist – familiar anyone?!) was excellent and kept us all on track. I recall the very large slide rule above the blackboard, and learning how slide rules and log tables enabled us to multiply, divide, and much else besides. I also remember

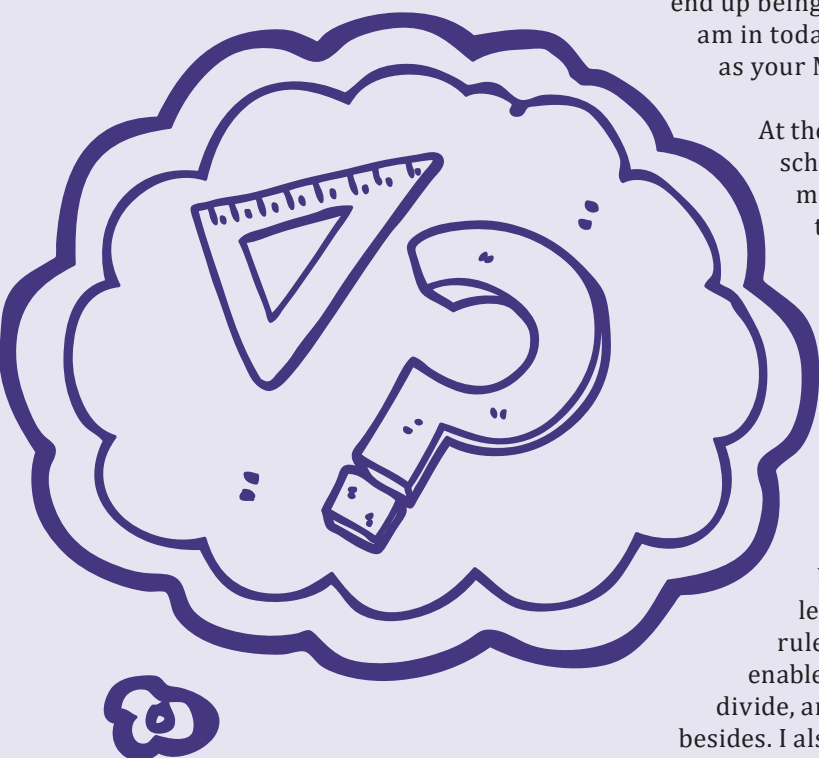
being shown a way of calculating the roots of a quadratic equation using a formula – how cool was that!

Three years of mathematics at the Upper School leading up to taking my O' levels were distinctly uninspiring. We didn't have any of the teachers from the grammar school – instead we had someone who struggled with discipline, almost never taught from the front of the classroom, and relied on using worksheets. We had access to SMP O' level textbooks which were, and still are, excellent, although we weren't taking SMP O' level, and the worksheets didn't seem to relate particularly well to the textbooks.

As an aside, the SMP AO' level mathematics, and A' level mathematics and further mathematics textbooks of that era, and subsequent revised versions, were excellent too, although we didn't have access to them then, and, in any case, I took Cambridge A' level and not SMP. But I did have the great honour of working with one of the lead authors of all three series of texts when I was taking my PGCE as he was the Head of Mathematics at my teaching practice school.

While we currently have some truly excellent A' level textbooks written or edited by some great authors for the 2017 reformed A' level mathematics and further mathematics qualifications, the SMP books would be remain valuable now in my view.

The highlight, or lowlight depending on how one looks at it, of my O' level years was the comment on my end of year 10 report – 'End of year exam mark 80%. Grade C+. Paul is coasting.' I think that just about sums up my years 9-11, during which I also found



the mathematics we were studying, or maybe the way we were covering it, distinctly uninspiring.

I took A' levels in mathematics, physics and chemistry – with the demise of the grammar school, gone were the days of taking four A' levels, and further mathematics was not viable. That became a pattern for many schools until the Further Mathematics Network was established some 30 years later – see below. I was also fortunate to have two superb A' level teachers – the same ones who had spent many years teaching A' levels - in Pure and Applied Mathematics as it was in those days - at the grammar school.

I appreciated the opportunity to study chemistry instead of further mathematics; I thrived in physical chemistry which had quite a lot of mathematics in it, particularly in kinetics with the opportunity to solve differential equations and deploy systematic integration, all in context. This ended up serving me well in my mathematics degree. I subsequently learned that we were taught almost all the further mathematics syllabus anyway!

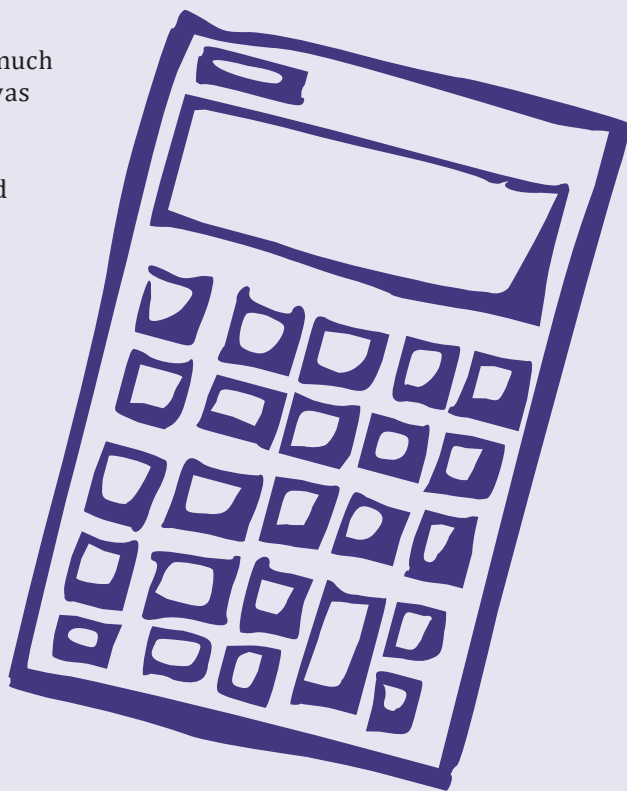
I thoroughly enjoyed all the A' level physics we studied, much of which relied very heavily on mathematics, including calculating the magnetic field in all manner of configurations of coils using integration from first principles, even though this had dropped off the syllabus the year before we took it! That stood me in good stead for any subsequent application of infinitesimal calculus, particularly in modelling in applied mathematics - from the determination of centres of mass, moments of inertia, including using polar coordinates and the theorems of Pappus, variable mass problems, and much else besides, during my degree.

But it was in A' level mathematics that I thrived – not necessarily in mastering all topics, but in my insatiable appetite to learn yet more, mainly on my own, and revel in the power, beauty and joy of every new idea I came across. In that regard

I haven't really changed much over the last 50 years. I was hooked!

The first topic we studied was Boolean algebra, mathematical logic, electronic gates, half and full adders. This was not on the mathematics syllabus but on the one for further mathematics, and only then as one of the optional topics. We started with this to open our eyes to different ways of thinking than we had been used to – the axiomatic method and formal proof. How lucky I was to have that exposure when it wasn't a requirement for an examination I would be taking. That taught me much about mathematics and the importance of opening students' eyes more widely than is strictly required by the intended curriculum. Little did I know that some years later I would spend many hours on IMA, LMS, JMC, and CaMS business, chairing meetings and giving talks in the LMS's De Morgan House named after the great mathematician whose laws are integral to Boolean algebra. These are displayed in symbols on the brass nameplate by the grand entrance in Russell Square in Bloomsbury, an area I would spend much time in at various venues for over a decade.

In the school library I discovered by accident an item from an Open University Unit on multiple integration – triple integrals to calculate the volume of that part of a sphere which had a cylindrically-shaped hole in it, using spherical polar coordinates, and other challenging problems. Seeing that, along with discovering the section on div, grad and curl, triple scalar and triple vector products, and differential geometry, in the Encyclopedia Britannica, all certainly helped when I was introduced to these topics during the first year of my degree. That



said, one notorious lecturer I had for vectors in the first year delighted in setting questions in tests which required proof of an identity involving six or more instances of the scalar and vector products, and at least four vectors, which even the members of staff invigilating often hadn't managed to prove before the end of the test!

The mathematics textbooks we used for A' level included the two volumes of the original editions of Pure Mathematics by Backhouse and Houldsworth (& Cooper – volume 2), the two volumes of Pure Mathematics by Parsonson, and the two volumes of Elementary Mechanics by Quadling and Ramsay. At the time I also discovered by chance in a secondhand book shop that Quadling and Ramsay had authored a third textbook – An introduction to advanced mechanics – I snapped that up! I devoured all these books.

But the text that I learned the most from which would support the first year of my degree was entitled University Mathematics by Blakey. This was one of a handful of mathematical books in my local library while I was in the sixth form, and as far as I recall I was the only person who had ever borrowed it.

Years later I was delighted to acquire a copy of my own from a secondhand bookshop.

One aspect of all the aforementioned texts relevant to A' level Mathematics is that they contained much in the way of breadth, depth, and stretch, particularly in the very many examples and exercises. It was the rich and diverse range of problems requiring strong problem-solving abilities that I valued most, something sorely lacking from current texts save for a few first-rate ones. I am sure this stood me in good stead for my subsequent research career in applied, numerical and computational mathematics.

Looking back on my A' level years has taught me the importance of making time for and encouraging learners to follow their interests and passions and providing them with resources and support to do so.

While in the sixth form I didn't have any idea what I might want to do when I left school. It was mentioned to us that going to study at a university was an option. We were shown a tea chest full of university prospectuses from the previous year and told we were welcome to borrow any to look through to see what we might want to apply for, and where to apply. I hadn't got a clue what 'university' was all about, but I nevertheless applied through UCCA (as it was in those days), initially for engineering courses. I liked the idea of continuing with physics and mathematics and was interested in all the areas and topics I would be able to study. It hadn't occurred to me that one could study just mathematics, and even if I had, I would have thought that not taking further mathematics would put me at a disadvantage, or that I wasn't good enough at mathematics to be able to study only that as my main subject.

I accepted a place at the University of Reading after my interview in year 13, but I then changed my application to physics as I was conscious that there would be more practical work on an engineering course than I had

envisaged, which wasn't one of my strong points.

Chemistry still played a role in my subsequent journey, though. My A' level chemistry teacher had recently studied at Reading and I enquired which hall of residence she had been in and would recommend. I opted for the same hall – Wessex – and had six (yes six!) very happy years there.

University Study

On arrival at Reading, I asked to switch to taking the two mathematics courses that would enable me to embark on a mathematics degree and which would sit alongside my physics course. I passed all my courses and really fell in love with all the mathematics I had studied. I subsequently graduated with a BSc in Mathematics.

One of the highlights of our first-year physics course was having small group tutorials with the world-renowned physicist HH Hopkins whose contributions to physics using sophisticated mathematical analysis are central to all modern optical design, including zoom lenses, coherent fibre-optics, and endoscopes which 'opened the door' to modern key-hole surgery. Anyone who has benefitted (if that's the right phrase!) from surgical procedures using an endoscope or accesses the internet (probably all of you), both of which apply to me, has HHH to thank, in part, for these technological advances. HHH was awarded the Royal Society's Rumford Medal for "outstanding contributions in the field of physics", whose previous winners include names familiar to many of you – Davy, Fresnel, Faraday, Stokes, Pasteur, Maxwell, Kirchoff, Ångström, Hertz, Röntgen, Becquerel, Rutherford, Lorentz, Bragg, and Haber. HHH was a giant in the world of physics, and I had the privilege of being taught by him.

Otherwise, my undergraduate career wasn't particularly

noteworthy, although my passion for mathematics continued and I felt I had more to learn and give, and so I became interested in postgraduate study. I also developed a keen interest in explaining what I had learned to support fellow students.

From my second year onwards I also helped showcase to applicants what Reading had to offer on 'interview/visit days'. This started what was to become an almost 40 year long journey on undergraduate admissions and recruitment activities at Reading. This was first as the Coordinator





for these activities, and then as Director of Undergraduate Studies, Senior Tutor, Admissions Tutor, and then through 5 years as Head of Department, giving talks to applicants and their supporters, and generally being 'the face' of our Department for applicants for most of this time.

That journey also saw the start of something else very special - I had met the person who I was to marry - Elizabeth (known to many of you) - on one of those very first interview days I had started helping with, talking with applicants and showing them around the Department's and

University's facilities. Elizabeth was in my group. She ended up in Wessex Hall too and we met again on her first day when she was in my group where I was helping freshers settle into the hall. That was some 46 years ago now.

My interest in further study and teaching and supporting young people led me to follow my degree with a PGCE in secondary mathematics teaching, and then an MSc in the Numerical Solution of Differential Equations, both at the University of Reading. My MSc dissertation was on numerical methods for singular perturbation

problems. Along with teaching many students on science programmes taking mathematics as a service course during the MSc, I also began my journey in computer programming - starting with BBC Basic, then Fortran 77 for some master's courses and my MSc dissertation, and for much of my subsequent research work. Later in my career this was replaced by MATLAB, and now Python. Programming has been an essential tool for much of my work, as much as Generative AI will likely be for the next generation.

Career - teaching, lecturing, and all that

While Elizabeth was studying for her PGCE, also in secondary mathematics, I was employed on a research contract for RAE Bedford and undertook a significant amount of tutorial work for extra remuneration in the Department of Mathematics where I was still based. Our plans were for careers in teaching mathematics in secondary schools, although I was also tempted by the idea of pursuing a PhD in mathematics.

I secured a teaching post at Maidstone Boys' Grammar School and Elizabeth had also secured a post in a similarly prestigious girls' grammar school in Tunbridge Wells. Only some 30 years later did I discover that the former Minister for School Standards, Nick Gibb, who I sometimes worked directly for on A' level and Core Maths matters, had been a pupil at the same school (but not when I was there), and spoke of how he "Believed Maidstone Grammar School to be the best. What was good about it was that it was rigorous. Every lesson was rigorous, even things like music: it was taught in the same way as chemistry." What more is there to say?!

However, part-way through our first term of teaching I learned that one of the senior academics I had worked with at Reading had secured a four-year research contract for

me, funded by AWRE Aldermaston, and based in the Department. I would receive a full-time salary as a Research Fellow and would be able to teach very many classes – lectures and tutorials – getting paid additionally for those, and study part-time for a PhD. This was too good an opportunity to let go and it meant I would also have achieved my qualified teacher status prior to this.

At the end of my teaching contract in August I spent a month working on a research contract for British Gas, modelling the volume of gas that had leaked following a fracture in a pipe, to ‘tide me over’ before starting the longer term research contract in October.

Four years of hard graft ensued, taking on even more teaching responsibilities each year, including five lecture courses and many tutorials, all for extra remuneration. I fulfilled my contract, started to publish my mathematics research, as well as taking every opportunity to get involved with Department and University activities, including much time still on undergraduate admissions and recruitment.

I was awarded my PhD on ‘Approximate Riemann solvers for systems of hyperbolic conservation laws.’ This, coupled with my previous experience acquired while a Research Fellow, put me in a good position to apply for, and subsequently be appointed to, a three-year temporary lectureship at Reading which was advertised in the final year of my research contract. My position was made permanent after two years, and I was subsequently promoted to Senior Lecturer, and then to Professor of Mathematics and Mathematics Education in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics as it was by then. For both promotions I was supported by a referee who I have known for over 35 years and who I have looked-up to and learned so much from – Professor David Burghes – one of the leading lights in mathematics education both nationally and internationally for many years, and without whom I would also not be writing this today.

I continued to work in applied mathematics, mostly computational fluid dynamics, and more generally numerical analysis, publishing

many papers and presenting at conferences, as well as supporting and supervising PhD research students.

During my QTS year, I had the good fortune to meet another mathematics probationary teacher/NQT who had spent many years in academia in a war-stricken country in Africa. He introduced me to the Mathematical Gazette, and similar journals he had published in, which opened my eyes to the possibility of exploring new mathematical ideas, problems, and applications of mathematics relevant to school, college and university students, and to publishing in this area.

In more recent times I have published in other areas, including policy, practice, and professional development, relating to either university, college, or school education.

Among my 480 publications across mathematics and mathematics education, I am particularly pleased that 82 of these have been in MA publications (equally split between the Gazette and Mathematics in School), with my first ever publication in mathematics education appearing in the Gazette, and my last one (at present) being chosen as one of ‘A Magnificent Twelve’ for the Anniversary Collection from across 127 years of the Gazette for the MA’s 150th Anniversary Celebration.

External Activities

My interest in outreach started soon after I became a lecturer with an invitation to develop and deliver a RI Masterclass, which I entitled ‘Torches, Teacups and Satellite TV’ and which I delivered on many occasions in various locations across Berkshire. This was based on my fascination with conic sections which began with the text by Blakey I encountered while in the sixth form. I had many ‘props’ to accompany this, including lots of cardboard cones which were the equivalent of a cotton

reel, but for wool, for knitting machines, and which were invaluable for these classes.

I subsequently developed further outreach sessions on prime, transcendental, and Fibonacci numbers; ciphers, codes and code breaking; internet security and the RSA algorithm; and others. I took every opportunity to deliver these sessions at national or regional widening participation events, as well as more locally in schools and colleges in Berkshire, including giving other, more specialised sessions focusing on careers and studying at university, sometimes as a STEM Ambassador. I also started up a Mathematics Summer School and similar events at Reading bringing students from across our wider region to the University to explore and learn about new areas or applications of mathematics. This has now evolved into University's Scholars Programme, which I lead on for our Department. School and college students of all ages have so much to gain from enrichment activities.

Outreach activities also provide valuable experience for undergraduate students, particularly if they have an interest in pursuing teaching as a career. Providing placement or similar opportunities for students in schools has been key to helping me support the next generation (along with mentoring colleagues to support their career development, which I have been able to do as I get older, and hopefully wiser).

In 2005 I supported the introduction of the Berkshire Further Mathematics Network Centre, which morphed into the local FMSP support. I coordinated and delivered revision sessions and other outreach events at the University in partnership with colleagues from MEI who I had the privilege to work with for many years in their roles for FMSP, and more recently AMSP.

Over the years I have undertaken many Departmental and University leadership roles, particularly in teaching, support, examinations,

admissions, undergraduate and postgraduate studies, outreach, and as Head of Department which included leading a successful merger of the Departments of Mathematics and Statistics. This has also led to much external reviewing and external examining activities across universities for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including degree programme accreditation as a stepping stone to the IMA's Chartered Mathematician designation.

I have had the privilege of developing and delivering over 25 different courses for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in mathematics, or in service courses for other students on programmes ranging from architecture to zoology.

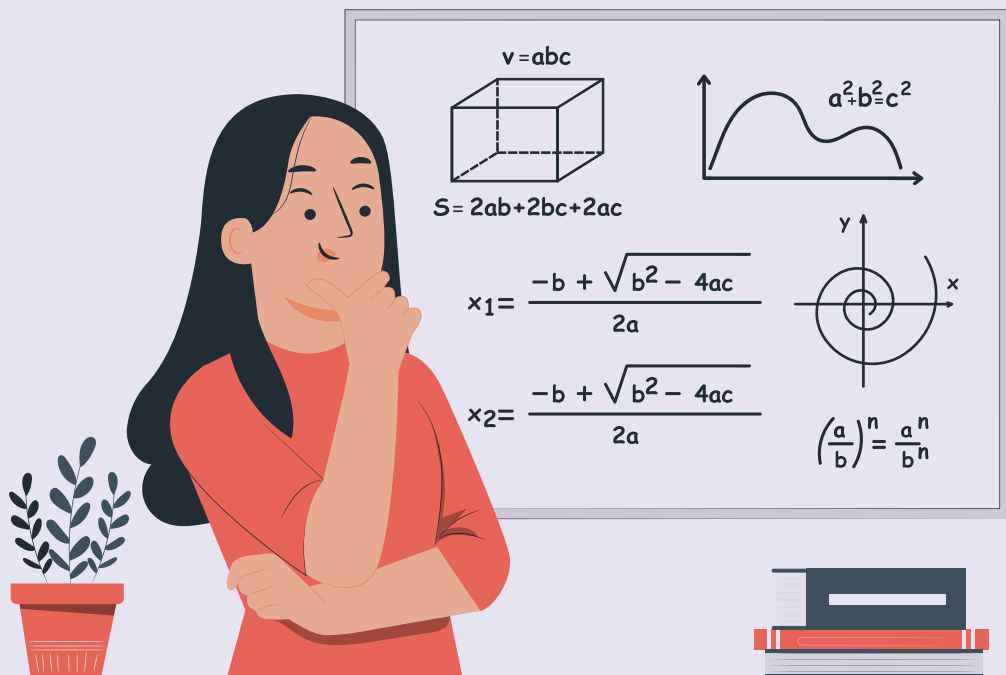
The course on communicating mathematics for final year students was unique when it was first introduced nearly 30 years ago, and led the way in developing students' written and oral communication, team working, and research skills. I would like to see more of this kind of activity in schools and colleges within mathematics.

In 2013 I had the opportunity to become involved with national education policy for post 16 mathematics, including A' levels in Mathematics and Further Mathematics, and Core Maths. Since then, I have been blessed with so many further opportunities to support mathematics and mathematics education at

school and university level, and beyond. This includes membership of, or chairing, many national and regional committees, and working with and supporting many agencies, as well as leading on post 16 mathematics education. These include the Department for Education (DfE), the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), the Royal Society, RS ACME, Academy for the Mathematical Sciences (AcadMathSci), Campaign for Mathematical Sciences (CaMS), JMC, BCME, IMA, LMS, RSS, AMSP, CMSP, Maths4Girls, Maths Hubs, NCETM, Qualifications Wales, Council for Curriculum, Examination and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland, and awarding organisations – AQA, Pearson, and OCR.

Highlights to date include: working on A' levels in Mathematics and Further Mathematics on the A level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB) for the development of the 2017 reformed Subject Content for DfE, which ultimately led to becoming Chair of the Royal Society's Expert Panel for A' levels, being part of RS ACME; leading on work on Core Maths for DfE and supporting the Core Maths Support Programme (CMSP); many reviews for Ofqual; and being elected as Chair of JMC





I have had the honour of meeting many eminent people during my Core Maths 'journey' all of whom have been keen supporters of Core Maths, and who have additionally helped and supported me in my career.

These include the President of the Royal Society Sir Adrian Smith PRS and the UK's National Statistician Professor Sir Ian Diamond, both of whom are keen supporters of Core Maths. I have also had much support from my former 'boss', Sir David Bell, when he was Vice-Chancellor at Reading. Sir David is now Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of Sunderland and has an additional role as Vice Chair of the newly formed Skills England. Sir David was Permanent Secretary at the DfE when Michael Gove was Secretary of State and responsible for the '2010 Schools White Paper: the importance of teaching', which ultimately led to the reform of A' levels and the introduction of Core Maths.

My experience with external reviews or examining, or accreditation, of university degree programmes in the mathematical sciences is that these adapt and evolve all the time to better serve the needs of their graduates. Reform of the school/college mathematics curriculum and associated qualifications takes place over a much longer timescale, which to some extent is to be expected and accepted. While (in England) we have curricula for A' level Mathematics and Further Mathematics, and Core Maths, which I am proud to have played a part in, the Royal Society's work on Mathematical and Data Education and report 'A new approach to mathematical and data education' makes a compelling case for change. I urge all of you to read the report – the Foreword from the great Sir Adrian Smith PRS alone is likely to convince you of the importance of preparing for the future. I have much enjoyed being part of RS ACME while this work has been progressing, and I am hugely supportive of 'MDE' (as it has affectionally been coined) and hope you will be too.

and getting to know and work with many organisations and professionals; chairing one Maths Hub Strategic board for the first five years of the Maths Hub programme, and then chairing another (for a new Maths Hub) for the subsequent five years, as well as being a member of the Strategic Boards of other Maths Hubs.

Recent activity as a member of the Advisory Group and the Steering Group of CaMS, and the impact this has had, has been particularly rewarding, including being a member of the Panel for the award of grants of up to £500,000 each to university departments for the 'Maths Degrees for the Future' initiative. This activity, under the umbrella of the LMS, has complemented my roles at the LMS on its Education Committee, International Affairs Committee, and as the UK's representative to ICMI.

Given current trends in admissions to university mathematics degrees in the UK, I am firmly of the view that it is vital that we encourage and support many more young people from as diverse a group as possible to pursue mathematical sciences degrees. Not only will this benefit them individually, but it is also critical for our collective futures,

not least to increase the number of specialist mathematics teachers to support the next generation of mathematical scientists, and others, who will be needed in the future in a wide range of roles, jobs and careers in all sectors.

Similar remarks apply for young people who need strong and high-level quantitative skills for their studies at school, college or university, and subsequently in employment. We have a qualification in England at Level 3 (Core Maths) and in Scotland at Level 6 (Higher Applications of Mathematics) which serve this purpose. Core Maths focusses on developing fluency and confidence in using and applying mathematical and statistics skills to address authentic problems, drawn from study, work and life, with a strong emphasis on contextualised problem-solving. This is relevant and valuable for many more post 16 students than are currently taking it. It is clear to me that Core Maths, or what it represents and might evolve into, must play an even greater role in the curriculum in the future, and is precisely what is needed to improve the mathematical and quantitative skills of the vast majority of young people who are not studying the mathematics that is currently found in A' level mathematics.



I met Anthony Tomei CBE after he retired from his role as Director of the Nuffield Foundation a decade ago, again through Core Maths. As well as playing a leading role in the MDE work and accompanying report for the Royal Society, I have learned much from Anthony throughout this time and he has always been supportive of my work and of Core Maths.

The IMA has offered me so many opportunities and I have valued enormously all of those I have had, and those I continue to have there. Somewhere after I was awarded Fellowship (FIMA), and the Chartered Designations CMath and CSci, I was elected to Council. I continue as a member of Council (and other IMA committees) as an officer as Honorary Secretary. This means I have overall responsibility as chair of panels for Fellowship, Chartered Designations – CMath, CSci, and also CMathTeach – as well as Advanced Data Science Professional (AdvDSP) certification which we anticipate will lead to the introduction of a

Chartership in Data Science. The latter is part of the Alliance for Data Science Professionals (AfDSP) where I have forged new professional friendships across RSS, BCS and ORS. I chaired the AfDSP group that has developed an accreditation scheme for data science degrees which we plan to roll out this year. I am a firm believer in the role of professional standards, qualifications and designations to demonstrate one's commitment to professional development.

Being a member of the IMA Schools & FE Committee and Higher Education Committee, and carrying out many degree course accreditations for the IMA, has been invaluable for my work across all phases of education up to and beyond university.

The IMA has also enabled me to support ITT through the DfE-funded Mathematics Teacher Training Scholarships. In the early days we ran regional assessment centres for these, with a test, group discussions and interviews, which I initiated and led at Reading. I have supported many regional and national events for the DfE's Future Teaching Scholars (FTS) programme for specialist mathematics and physics teachers,

and where I am also a member of the Advisory Board.

FTS is a fantastic programme comprising a six-year full-time support package. During years 1 to 3 Scholars study and then graduate with either a mathematics or physics degree, while also receiving numerous in-school teaching experiences across a variety of schools through Regional Training Centres (RTC) hosted by outstanding Teaching Schools.

I also supported the DfE's National Mathematics & Physics SCITT as it was being rolled out. I had first-hand experience of supporting the development of non-specialist mathematics teachers through the Teacher Subject Specialism Training (TSST) courses offered through DfE (and previously NCTL), particularly through leading the introduction of accreditation of TSST courses by a panel, which I also chaired in my role as Chair of JMC. I very much enjoy my role as a Reader for The Royal Anniversary Trust in assessing applications for the prestigious Queen Elizabeth Prizes for Higher and Further Education, part of the UK national honours system.

If I have one piece of general advice to offer anyone regardless of where they are in their career, it is to be positively inclined toward any opportunities you are offered and to think very seriously about saying 'yes'. Alternatively, consider offering support for or volunteer for other activities - our great community only exists, thrives and achieves because of your collective support and commitment. Learning from and working with others, and making a positive impact, however small, is really rewarding. I am so grateful to have had a career which has afforded me the opportunity to meet and work with very many people across many organisations and sectors in a diverse range of roles, all of whom I have learned and gained much from.

I have a confession, though. There are two occasions when I have had to

say 'no' to a request – one was to proofread and work through a fantastic book by one of our former Presidents and a superb author and communicator – you know you are! While I would very much like to have said 'yes', this was not going to be possible within the timescale required – a couple of weeks – given my commitments then. The other occasion was when I was asked to be Treasurer of one of the excellent charitable organisations currently working for our communities. Having been Treasurer of the British Applied Mathematics Colloquium (BAMC) – the leading UK residential conference for applied mathematics – some years earlier, and losing much sleep worrying about budgets, expenditure, income and lack thereof, including those who didn't pay their conference fee or for their accommodation, I vowed never to take on such a role again. So, saying 'no' is allowed!

Given this unplanned career in which I have been so fortunate to have been in the right place at the right time, at the end of 2022 I received the most amazing news that was so unexpected – I was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire – CBE – in the King's New Years Honours List 2023 for services to Education. I was most surprised, but of course delighted, and very humbled to receive this honour.

What was particularly special was that my Investiture at Windsor Castle was on the same date – 3rd October – that I went up to the University of Reading.

To cap off an amazing 2023 I received another most unexpected invitation – this time from my good friend and colleague, and MA President at the time, and former IMA President – Professor Nira Chamberlain OBE – inviting me to become the President of the MA in 2025. My reply was as

swift as it was succinct – “Wow!

This has come as a real surprise, and I feel honoured, privileged and most humbled to be nominated for this role by the MA Council, and following in the footsteps of some truly great mathematicians, including your good self. I would be delighted to accept the role.”

During my Presidency I will do my best to serve the members of the Mathematical Association and continue as I, and many former Presidents and members have done, in celebrating the beauty, power, and joy of mathematics, befitting our prestigious organisation entering its 155th year. Thank you everyone in advance for your support.

