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Report of the Mathematical Association Annual Conference by Chris Sangwin

The Mathematical Association Annual conference took place this year at The University of York, from 13-16th April. With the theme "Maths Takes Shape", this conference was a celebration of all things geometrical. This included a presidential address from Sir Christopher Zeeman in which he presented some theorems in plane geometry and discussed their counterparts in three dimensions. This concentrated on the various centres of triangles, and looked at corresponding results for a tetrahedron.

As one would expect of a Mathematical Association conference, the majority of sessions were of interest predominantly for school teachers. However, there was a significant number directly relevant to Higher Education. These included talks from Charlie Stripp on the changes to A-level Mathematics, and A-level Further Mathematics. The latter will appear in condensed form in the August issue of the newsletter, and is very encouraging from the point of view of encouraging widening participation in Further Mathematics.

On particularly interesting talk was by Barry Lewis about

sequences and series, involving the Fibonacci and Bernoulli sequences and their generating functions. This included some material which would be excellent for undergraduate analysis coursework problems, which I believe will appear soon in the Gazette.

One interesting idea from the classroom to make lessons more interactive was to use A4 sized white boards with dry markers, on which students would write their answers to oral questions. These can then be held up for the teacher to see, rather than just asking one student for the answer. This keeps students awake, since they have to respond, and allows the teacher to identify students who have answered incorrectly. This is something that could work well in HE, even perhaps in larger groups. A very interesting and low-tech teaching tip, which I might well try sometime soon.

Next year the Mathematical Association conference comes together with all the other major UK teaching organizations in a joint event BCME6 to be held at the University of Warwick, from 30 March to 2 April. More info from: <http://www.bcme6.org/>