

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

T.C. Hurley

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Since our last Newsletter the Society put most of its effort into two main areas, viz. conferences and the Mathematical Olympiad in schools.

The Group Theory Conference in Galway was a tremendous success with over 25 participants, including a small number from abroad. Great credit is due to the main speakers for their very informative presentation, tending to review some of the main areas of the theory and not getting bogged down in technical detail. Martin Newell, the organiser, has plans well in hand for another conference in May this year and informs us that he hopes to make it an annual event. Group Theory is alive, well and flourishing in Ireland.

The History of Mathematics Conference in Cork attracted a great deal of interest with about 25 participants. The nature of the material made it very amenable, and all the participants seemed to enjoy it very much. The article "Calculating Prodigies" by J. Callagy, which appears in this Newsletter had its origin at this Conference. Many thanks are due to Des MacHale, the organiser. (It didn't turn out to be another Kerryman joke as some believed!).

The Conference on Matrix Theory and its Applications held recently attracted not only Mathematicians, but also Statisticians, Economists, Business Admists., Engineers and Educationalists. Personally, I had not realised the extent of the applications of the theory in all areas, and the interplay between the various disciplines was very stimulating.

The Mathematics Contest for schools took place on 6th March with about 700 Irish students taking part. The contest was organised by the Society with the co-operation of the Irish Mathematics Teachers Association. The organising subcommittee consisted of Finbarr Holland, Tom Laffey and Fred Holland. I don't know how they did it, but they managed, despite the postal strike, to get the papers delivered to places as far away as Letterkenny and Bunclody. Results are slowly trickling in but the postal strike is holding things up. The contest is being sponsored by the Educational Company of Ireland Ltd., and we are grateful for their support.

At a meeting in Helsinki, agreement was not reached on the formal creation of a European Federation of Mathematical Societies. The Oberwolfach Institute for Mathematicians has, in the meanwhile, placed their offices at Freiburg at the disposal of the interested parties and is, among other things, collecting, collating and disseminating information of Mathematical interest. It is from there that we receive the list of forthcoming Mathematical Meetings which you will have seen.

At the instigation of the Society, in particular Finbarr Holland and Martin Newell, the National Council for Educational Awards (N.C.E.A.) conducted a numeracy-type test in the Regional Colleges. The N.C.E.A. decided not to reveal the results.

We have about 120 members in the Society but a number of these have fallen behind in their subscription - still only £2.00. If you are one of them, our treasurer Martin Newell (U.C.G.) would be most pleased to hear from you. A list of the Committee appears on page 36, and you may also hand your subscription to any one of these. We would

welcome contributions to the Newsletter - short surveys, problems, solutions to previous problems, news and information, jokes, etc. - even criticism. The address is:- The Editor, I.M.S. Newsletter, Mathematics Department, University College, Relfield, Dublin 4.