

Report on the 2005 meeting of Newton Institute Correspondents

This year's meeting of Correspondents was held on Monday 27th June 2005 at the Institute. It was attended by 35 Correspondents or their substitutes (29 from Universities plus 6 from other organisations), out of a possible 78 (58 plus 20 respectively).

The agenda was as follows:

- 12.30 Lunch
- 13.30 Chris Rogers (Cambridge; an organiser of the *Developments in Quantitative Finance* programme): *Financial Mathematics, or Mathematical Finance?*
- 14.30 Sir John Kingman and Robert Hunt: presentation on future programmes at the Institute and current initiatives
- 15.00 Dugald Macpherson (Leeds; an organiser of the *Model Theory in Algebra and Analysis* programme): presentation on funding arrangements and how to be an organiser
- 15.30 Tea
- 16.00 Open Discussion
- 17.00 Ehud Hrushovski (Hebrew University; Rothschild Visiting Professor on the *Model Theory in Algebra and Analysis* programme): *Integration and logic*
- 18.00 Wine Reception

The presentation by the Director and Deputy Director covered the future plans of the Institute and the programmes currently in preparation, emphasising the importance of UK-wide participation, and outlined various schemes and initiatives operated by the Institute to ensure that the benefit of Institute activity is spread as widely as possible around the whole UK community. Particular emphasis was placed on satellite workshops and other meetings, the Junior Membership scheme and the mechanism for encouraging overseas participants in Institute programmes to travel to other UK institutions to give seminars and make new contacts. Correspondents were strongly urged to invite suitable overseas participants to their own departments and to make maximum use of this scheme.

Dugald Macpherson, who was both a programme organiser and an organiser of a satellite workshop at UEA, gave a presentation on various aspects of Newton Institute programmes from an organiser's point of view, with particular attention to funding aspects. He emphasised the high level of assistance provided by the staff of the Institute, while making it clear that becoming an organiser is a substantial but important undertaking. He also gave an idea of what is involved in organising a satellite workshop, and Correspondents were encouraged to consider hosting one at their own institution.

During the Open Discussion, a wide variety of points were made, both major and minor.

- It was suggested that the Institute should hold short meetings for young post-docs, perhaps in the format of "forums". However, the Director pointed out that although similar ideas have been considered on several occasions, the Institute is in general not well placed to deliver short meetings: ICMS is a more suitable location. Suggestions and proposals are, nevertheless, always welcomed.
- The situation of European post-docs was discussed, and the Director outlined the EPDI scheme, whilst explaining that the poor funding situation means that the future of the scheme is uncertain.
- A Correspondent asked whether Institute programmes, whilst clearly being primarily research activities, should start with short instructional workshops. The Director agreed that this is a very positive activity and said that it is always discussed with organisers. The Deputy Director pointed out that the majority of programmes do in fact include at least one workshop in which training is a key element, and which young researchers are encouraged to attend; and that many programmes arrange a final workshop at or near the end of the programme at which a summary of the results achieved and the state of play is presented. It was agreed that good publicity for instructional events is of prime importance; while the Junior Membership list is useful in this regard, the Institute promised to improve publicity and flag such events much more clearly in emails to

Correspondents. For their part, Correspondents agreed to encourage PhD students and young post-docs to join the Junior Membership scheme where appropriate.

- The Institute also promised to improve the information included in emails to Correspondents concerning related scientific areas, to ensure that workshop announcements can be distributed to those in departments other than mathematics who might be interested.
- Correspondents were asked to think about the balance between different scientific areas in forthcoming programmes and to suggest any additional areas that the Institute should be considering. They asked whether the Scientific Steering Committee acted in a responsive or proactive mode; the Director responded that it works in a mixed mode, considering proposals received whilst actively looking for other areas to be stimulated.
- A query was raised about why most of the Institute's planned programmes seemed to be on applied topics rather than pure ones. The Director and Deputy Director explained that this has not always been the case: the ratio is well balanced over time, and the ratio of programme acceptances between pure and applied matches the ratio of proposals. There is certainly no set policy; however, inter-disciplinarity is an aspect that the Institute likes to consider and this has been backed up by the community.
- A Correspondent asked about the level of interaction between the Institute and the Centre for Mathematical Sciences next-door. The Director replied that it is less than we would like; but that it is important to remember that the Institute represents the whole of the UK community and is not an arm of the Cambridge Mathematics Faculty. However, it is important that we encourage Cambridge academics to take part in Institute programmes, and that they take sabbatical leave to support such visits. Cambridge University is treated just as any other UK University.
- In response to a question about the various new mathematics institutes currently being formed, such as at Imperial, the Director stated that the Institute welcomes such "competition" and regards any increase in mathematical activity as being a positive step. Different institutes will be able to offer different types of activity (e.g., short versus long programmes, stand-alone institutes versus those that are embedded within home departments, research as part of ongoing, long-term programmes of activity versus isolated conferences); this variety of offerings is desirable, and the Institute will monitor developments with interest.
- The "Research in Pairs" programme at Oberwolfach was proposed as a model that the Institute might be interested in. The Director pointed out that this would have to be at the expense of other Institute activity, as the Institute has a full calendar.
- Some Correspondents were apparently receiving Institute emails twice. (This has since been corrected.) It was agreed that information from the Institute should continue to be disseminated to Correspondents in both email and hard-copy formats. The Institute's Calls for Proposals should continue to be sent to Correspondents who will forward it as appropriate; although an email list of Heads of Mathematics Departments is in existence, HoDs are not always the most appropriate contacts.

Correspondents were reminded of the very high importance of their role, urged to continue disseminating information as widely as possible, and thanked warmly for their willingness to be a part of the Institute's network.

Robert Hunt
July 2005