Transire suum pectus mundoque potiri

The Newsletter

Editor:
David MacTaggart

In Memoriam

We are very sorry to announce the sudden and unexpected death of Professor Adrian Bowman, a former Head of School and much-respected colleague. Adrian was a statistician of international stature and also a wonderful person, with many in the School having been enriched by his friendship, help and advice. The annual Bowman lecture has now become an important and established event in the University's calendar, attracting high calibre international speakers.

This news has shocked everyone who knew Adrian. On behalf of the School, we offer our heartfelt condolences to Adrian's family. Further just tribute to Adrian will follow in the near future. An online book of condolences can be found *here*.

PhD success

Many congratulations to *Alejandro Roque Piedra*, *Mengran Li*, *Parth Shimpi*, *Lewis Dean*, *Julian Gonzales*, *Isacco Nonino* and *Ariane Nidelle Meli Chrisko* who recently passed their vivas. If I've missed any names, please let us know and they will be included in the next edition.

UKMHD 2026

On June 4th and 5th, the Geophysical and Astrophysical Fluid Dynamics (GAFD) Group hosted UKMHD 2026, the annual national conference on magnetohydrodynamics (MHD) research. This meeting has been running since 1978 and it has been 10 years since we last hosted it in Glasgow.

Forty presentations (including two invited speakers) and ten posters made up the business part of the programme, with sessions on convection, dynamos, instabilities, theoretical aspects, magnetic reconnection and solar/astrophysical modelling. The conference dinner was held in Fonn Mór on Byres Road.



Participants of UKMHD 2026 at Kelvin's Globe.

Prizes were awarded, two for posters and two for oral presentations. The judges, coming from outside Glagow, awarded one of the oral presentation prizes to our very own *Sage Stanish*, well done Sage!

Even a two-day meeting requires a fair amount of organization. In addition to the work by *Rob Teed*, *Radostin Simitev* and your humble Editor, thanks must be given to *Erin Gonzalez* and *Lynsey-Anne Moffat* for their help (and their patience!).

One of the participants was blind (though this did not stop her presenting a poster and an oral presentation) and we provided her with a programme printed in Braille. We are indebted to Diane McLellan of Braille Etc. for producing the programme at relatively short notice.

The meeting as a whole was very well received by the 60 participants. Next year, UKMHD will be hosted by Durham University. Be warned, the bar has been set high!

A Visit to Malaya

By Philipp Otto

During April and May, I had the opportunity to spend several weeks as a Visiting Professor at Universiti Malaya. Alongside the expected academic activities — seminars, meetings, collaborations, and the universal struggle against reviewer comments — I became unexpectedly interested in something else: how mathematics departments present themselves visually.

The Mathematics & Statistics building in Glasgow presents itself through the familiar blackboard-style facade covered with genuine mathematical formulae, diagrams, proofs, and fragments of actual research from the School. It looks somewhere between a seminar room after a difficult PhD viva and the notebook of somebody who has not slept properly since the last REF cycle. In other words: highly authentic. The facade manages to look both impressive and slightly intimidating, which is perhaps exactly right for a School of Mathematics and Statistics.

Near the Institute of Mathematical Sciences at Universiti Malaya, I encountered a rather different visual philosophy. There, a mural shows a tree composed of mathematical symbols, equations, and Greek letters, accompanied by the phrase "Math Is Awesome." Compared with Glasgow's research-heavy blackboard wall, the Malaysian version feels more artistic, optimistic, and perhaps slightly less concerned with whether all displayed equations are technically compatible with one another.

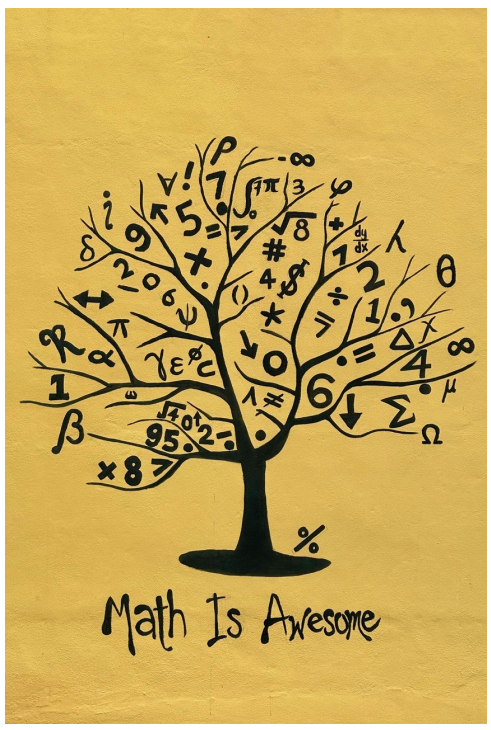
The contrast is surprisingly revealing. The Glasgow facade communicates mathematics as active research: precise, technical, and intellectually demanding. The Malaysian mural presents mathematics more as creativity and exploration, something alive, branching naturally into different directions. One resembles a snapshot from an advanced research seminar; the other looks more like mathematics as public art.

Both approaches have their charm, and both say something meaningful about academic culture.

More generally, the visit highlighted how differently universities construct their atmosphere. While Glasgow's campus architecture often emphasizes tradition, continuity, and scholarly seriousness, Universiti Malaya combines tropical surroundings, bright colours, modern installations, and a noticeably more relaxed visual identity.

Of course, beneath these stylistic differences, academic life itself is remarkably similar. Conversations about grants, supervision, software issues, teaching loads, and publication/impact strategies appear to transcend geography completely.

The visit was scientifically very productive and led to several new research discussions and collaborations. But it also served as a useful reminder that mathematics departments do not only communicate through papers and lectures. Sometimes they also communicate through walls covered in equations. Or, through a mathematical tree cheerfully informing visitors that maths is, indeed, awesome.



In case you didn't know already...

ICM 2030

International Mathematical Congress

Glasgow has been successful in its bid to host the International Mathematics Congress (ICM) in 2030, the largest conference of pure mathematics in the world. It is at this highly prestigious event where Fields medals are awarded. Many more details about the event can be found *here*.

International Conference on Teaching Statistics 2030

Mitchum Bock

ICOTS 2030 (International Conference on Teaching Statistics)

The School of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Glasgow is delighted to share that the bid for Glasgow to host ICOTS 2030 (the International Conference on Teaching Statistics) has been successful!

ICOTS is the flagship global event in the statistics education community, bringing together leading statistics educators to share research, scholarship, and the latest innovations in statistical education. The conference is part of the International Association for Statistical Education (IASE) programme and is held every 4 years. It has recently been in Australia, Argentina, Japan and USA. The first ICOTS was held in Sheffield in 1982, and the 2030 conference will be a welcome return to the UK after 48 years.

Hosting ICOTS 2030 is major achieve-

ment for the School and the University, bringing around 800 delegates to Glasgow, and is a great opportunity to showcase the scholarship in statistics and data science education within the School. The bid was led by *Dr Mitchum Bock*, *Dr Eilidh Jack* and *Dr Craig Alexander* from the School, together with colleagues at UCL and the University of Manchester.

Glasgow Science Festival

The Glasgow Science Festival was in full swing in June, celebrating its 20th birthday - *Cheers for 20 years*.

Members of the School did not miss out on the action. *Shazia Ahmed* organized activities including

- 20 tangrams, one Glasgow (making Glasgow-related symbols using tangrams such as bell, tree, bird, fish, unicorn, highland coo, etc).
- A card game based on Blackjack requiring player to reach a score of 20 (using probability).
- Building a 20-sided solid (icosahedron).
- An excellent code-breaking activity designed by *Sarah Jamieson* who is one of our undergrads.
- Finally, using our knitted maths banner to play fun bingo style game.

Further thanks goes to *Meyvizhi Sasibala* for activity design and to *Lewis Dean*, *Hannah-May D'Ambrosio*, *Xiaochen Yang*, *Matthew Parker* and *Teng Wei Yeo* for volunteering their time and contributing to the success of the event.

The GAFD group were also active at the festival. As well as plasma balls, motors and interesting visual displays, *Val Aslanyan* and *Sage Stanish* presented an MHD pump, which they made using the 3D printer in the Advanced Ressearch Centre (this also made an appearance at UKMHD, entertaining participants as they queued for lunch).



Part of the team: Val Aslanyan, Francis Swan, Sage Stanish and Ayesha Sarwar.

More details of the event can be found *here*, including a promotional video.

A voice from the past

by Hector Baillie

I am an alum of Glasgow University. That means I graduated from there a long time ago. Most Universities DON'T follow up with their graduates, and maybe Glasgow is the exception.

I was born in Islay, but grew up in Jordanhill Glasgow, and went to the nearby school. It was fun, good staff, and a positive attitude towards learning. My older brother, Tom, left to do Chemistry. My twin brother, got good Higher grades and went into Medicine at age 17. In my sixth year I needed to figure out what to do with my life. Counselling was non-existent. I decided to WORK hard that year, and came out with flying colours in the Sciences. I too went to Glasgow University, but to do Mathematics and Physics (plus Astronomy and Biology). Half way through Honors Maths, I was introduced to Biology (in the new Boyd Orr Building) and I was impressed. I asked if I could segway into Medicine, and was told "only if you do Statistics, otherwise forget it". So I trudged through the subject, and despite great teachers (eg. Ian Sneddon, Tommy Whitelaw, Ian Murphy, etc) I came away with a second class degree. I liked applied math, the purity of the science, and the vertical logic of statement-to-proof. I remember there were few girls in the Honors class, and that a drunken parties were rare.

After qualifying (1975), I went to several job interviews: operations research, actuary, accountant, systems engineering, Porton Down government work, statistical research - and as a programmer with IBM. Computer programming was fairly new. I took the train down to Havant (England), and had SEVEN interviews in one day. The last one was interesting. The interviewer told me he wanted to maximise use of the mainframe computer, and hence minimise turnover time between one user and the next. I said this looked pretty straightforward, 'tournament theory' type stuff, and was quite dismissive of the problem. Of course, he had been working on this for months and this new grad had the solution in his back pocket. I got offered a job a week later, and I turned it down. I told my mother I want to go into Medicine: she said "Don't be daft". Of course, she was right - always listen to your mother. If I had been an IBM Computer Programmer in 1977, I'd have retired long ago with Microsoft shares and a huge pension.

In 1974, I got appendicitis. I met Nurse MacKay in the Western Infirmary, and she has checked the abdominal scar nightly ever since. Thank you NHS.

I went to Strathclyde University (1975-76) and learned Bioengineering with Prof Kenedi's group. I was hopeful a Masters degree might be enough to get me entry into GU Medicine. Roshan Maini and I worked on a hemoperfusion detoxifier for liver failure, a bridge between engineering and disease. I also learned some electronics, tissue engineering, and computing. The Wolfson Building was a bridge year for me. Dr Oliver Holmes, on the interview committee, saw my passion for Medicine, and I was off! 1976-1981 saw me on a steep learning curve, but I knew this was what I wanted to do. I was based at the Western Infirmary (now torn down) and twin brother John at the Royal Infirmary.

I remember the day when everything became clear. Dr John Dagg, at the Western Infirmary, took 6 students to a patient's bedside. "Sit down and ask him one question each". We were all new to clinical interactions. Our patient was 58, had nicotine stained fingers and a bulbous nail-beds. His speech was staccato, and he had a tremor of his (somewhat painful) right arm. His right pupil was smaller than the left. Within about 10 minutes, we had diagnosed his lung cancer (Pancoast's tumour with a right Horner's syndrome) and cerebellar metastasis. No tests required. I was excited. The next patient, in the hematology ward, nursed a painful swollen left knee. He was young, and had no history of trauma or arthritis. Noting the surroundings, I asked him "do you have a familial blood disorder, like hemophilia?" It was then I realised being a Conan Doyle in Medicine, Sherlock Holmes MD, was what I wanted to do. And my career as an internist took shape. Many many years later, I learned Dr Dagg was still alive, and I had the privilege of writing a note of thanks to my exemplar in Glasgow.

After house jobs in the Western and Gartnavel General, I emigrated to Winnipeg Canada, did 4 years of Internal Medicine training, and ended up Chief Resident. I took on a year of Anaesthesia. A phone call in the OR - with my patient on cardiac bypass - persuaded me to visit British Columbia, on the west coast of Canada. Of course, no one gave me counselling about the pros and cons of leaving the Ivory Tower. Often the curtain of University/Department communication drops - and you are quickly forgotten (sad but true). My wife, Sheena joined me in this small hospital in Mission on the Fraser River. She worked in Maternity/ER and we raised a family. I spent 15 years working as an intensivist-internist, only to learn that eventually politics trumps patient-wellbeing. The administrative bureaucrats closed the hospital overnight, save for a vestigial emergency room, and I moved to Vancouver Island. The next 21 years of cardiac-internal medicine was comfortable and rewarding.

Along the way I met interesting people. I became a founding editor of the Canadian Journal of General Internal Medicine. I started Quality Improvement work on Vancouver Island. I was on various committees for the BC College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Doctors of BC. And then age caught up with me. I closed my office 3 years ago, and decided to do Rural/Remote locums in the far north (Prince Rupert). A new chapter.

I was proud when my daughter, Carole, graduated PhD Philosophy from the University of Glasgow. I was introduced to the Head of the GU Medical School, and my various contributions to the alma mater were presented to me (eg. cartoon work for the Student Guardian newspaper). My wife and I sat in The Bute Hall, and we saw our child receive her degree decades after I got mine. My other kids are smart, University trained and successful.

Lastly, what can I say about the importance of learning from alumni. Don't underestimate how those roots can support a host of different careers, and spread worldwide. Yes, I know clinical training in Medicine (Glasgow) is envied everywhere, but Medicine is changing and new skills are needed. My older brother (DSc Chem) is now a retired professor (U of Washington). My twin brother (BSc MB MACG, Raleigh Durham) died of a brain tumour. My wife quit nursing over 20 years ago. I am still looking for my next job. I've written 2 books, have a blog in the Medical Post, and need to land gently on the retirement glidepath.

In my day, entering Medical School with a degree was uncommon (there were 5 of us in the class of '81). Not so over here in the Americas. My buddy Gord MacLaughlan (a retired Surgeon in Nanaimo BC) is another graduate of GU Mathematics. We are both proud of the association. A world-wide network to be *valued*. Maclaurin would be proud.



Hector Baillie, Glasgow Mathematics graduate

Ed. note: many thanks to Hector. We are keen to hear from other alumni,

particularly those who, like Hector, have pursued careers outside of mathematics.

WHO VISIT

BY OLIVER STONER

In March, PhD student *Sara Euzzor* was invited to visit the headquarters of the World Health Organization in Geneva, alongside one of her supervisors, *Dr Oliver Stoner*. The pair also joined WHO partners in attending the UN Expert Group Meeting on Sustainable Development Goal 7 at the Palais des Nations. The meeting brought together experts from governments, international organizations, academia, and civil society, to inform the review of SDG7 at the 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The visit to the WHO also supported the preparation of the Clean Cooking chapter for Tracking SDG7: The Energy Progress Report 2026. Sara has been developing new models to estimate the number of people relying on polluting fuels and technologies for their household lighting worldwide, which hasn't been previously quantified in detail. As a result of her visit to the WHO, which followed a remote presentation to the WHO household energy team earlier this year, the main findings of Sara's work have been published as a box in the Tracking SDG7 report.

Overall, the analysis suggested that the global population mainly relying on kerosene, oil, gasoline, paraffin or diesel lamps, or solid fuels, as their main light source has decreased from about 1.2 billion people in 2000 to about 200 million in 2024. The new lighting modelling helps to provide a more complete picture of sustainable energy progress and expands Glasgow's longstanding role in supporting international household energy tracking for the SDGs.

NABOJ MATHS COMPETITION 2026

BY SHAZIA AHMED

We were delighted to host the Naboj international mathematical competition for the fourth year in a row. The competition is hosted in many cities across 15 countries with the event taking place concurrently across all centres. We welcomed approximately 100 students and their teachers from schools in and around Glasgow with 12 teams competing in the junior (S3/4) and 11 in the senior (S5/6) category. This year we had an additional 14 teams on the waiting list as there was unfortunately not enough space to accommodate all those wishing to participate. There was a live leaderboard which could be configured to show the progress of the teams in the room, the country or internationally; we switched between 'room' and 'country'. It was a very intense two-hour period where the teams worked hard to solve as many questions as possible with Williamwood High School maintaining their winning streak by scooping the first prize in both categories again!

Some comments from the participants included: "[Enjoyed] working as a team and thinking critically. Friends and maths are the best combination! The experience was amazing and the staff were so friendly :)", "Well organised event", "Great snacks and t-shirts!", and my favourite "the sense of group stress was fun I suppose". Several pupils had taken part in in previous years and mentioned they that they look forward to coming back next year. Thanks very much to *Nigel Mottram* for his welcome talk for the pupils. Thanks also go to our student helpers: *Matthew Parker*, *Lucy Sykes*, *Elsie McArthur*, *Lois Kerr*, *Alyssa Murray*, *Hongjin Ren*, *Mikhail Vasilev* and *Lewis Dean*, and to staff helpers and organisers: *Steve Roper*, *Matt Durey* and *Jenny August* (and *Shazia Ahmed*). We are also grateful for the financial support from the Marion Reid Bequest, Glasgow Mathematical Journal Learning and Research Support Fund, Edinburgh Mathematical Society and sponsorship from Jane Street.

STATISTICS IN MALTA

BY ARCHER GONG ZHANG



Members of the Statistics Group attending the conference in Malta.

Members of the School had a strong presence at the International Statistical Institute Regional Statistics Conference 2026, held in Malta from 3–5 June.

Daniela Castro-Camilo, *Craig Alexander*, *Claire Miller*, *Vinny Davies*, *Benn Macdonald*, *Marian Scott*, *Dirk Husmeier* and *Archer Gong Zhang* contributed to invited talks, panel discussions and organised sessions spanning environmental statistics, artificial intelligence, healthcare, uncertainty quantification, spatio-temporal modelling, data integration, and inclusion in statistics.

A particular highlight was the panel Statistically Principled Environmental AI, organised by members of the School and featuring *Marian Scott*, *Tiffany Vlaar*, *Raphael Huser* and *Noel Cressie*, who discussed the future of AI in environmental science.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas, strengthen collaborations and build new connections across the international statistics community.

HODGE THEORY

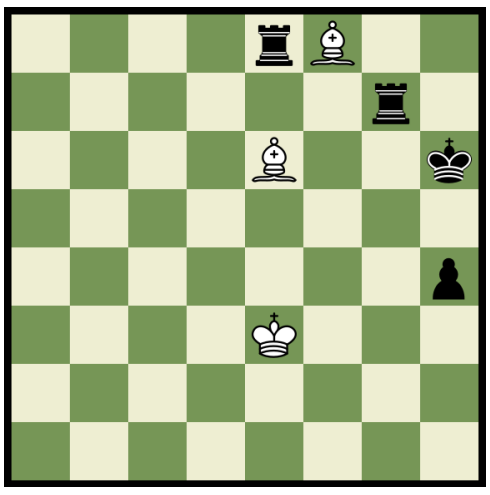
BY DAVID HODGE

In personal chess news, I had a very successful trip to Wiesloch in April, bringing home first place in the German Championship (though my lack of Germanness means I'm understandably not German Champion). I'll be back off to Magdeburg in Germany in August for the World Championships.



German Championship trophy

Today's new problem comes from the realm of unorthodox chess problems. This is a helpmate, where you control both players' moves to arrange a checkmate in the required number of moves. This one comes from British composer Colin Sydenham and is a rare Duplex Helpmate in 2, meaning there are unique solutions for both Black and White from the same starting position! So, the challenge is to play four individual moves ending in checkmate for White, and then repeat the process but aiming for checkmate for Black! Your solutions will be White-Black-White-Black checkmates and then returning to the original position Black-White-Black-White checkmates. Don't forget that all moves must be legal along the way. Good luck!



Last issue's solution:

Solution to the previous newsletter problem (Murray Marble, 1908). The key move is 1.Be4! sacrificing the bishop to no less than seven black pieces! The threat is 2.Qxd5 mate, and after all seven different captures by black on e4 a different unique white checkmate appears! I won't list them all, but the most surprising are perhaps 1...Re2xe4 2.Rc1#, 1...Qxe4 2.Rc2# and 1...Kxe4 2.Rc4#.

HEAD OF SCHOOL'S CORNER

BY NIGEL MOTTRAM

Many thanks to everyone for another interesting newsletter, summer has certainly been busy (even without the dreaded Moodle Standardisation). While teaching continues with the Summer School and MSc classes and projects, many of us have been able to head off to conferences (Malta looked a lot sunnier than Glasgow). But it's also worth mentioning the number of conferences that we have been successful in hosting and in bidding for recently. Bringing major conferences to Glasgow is a great way for us to connect our research with the wider world. Hosting academic gatherings does far more than showcase our own research—it draws the academic world directly to our city, our University campus, and our School, creating lasting benefits for our staff, students, and the local community. Some of these conferences include public lectures and other outreach events, which help to enthuse the next generation and to strip away the barrier between high-level maths and stats, and the public.

We have already seen this in action with recently hosted events over the summer. I was able to attend two of these - in June, the Geophysical and Astrophysical Fluid Dynamics group hosted UKMHD 2026, welcoming 60 participants for a "stellar" program of magnetohydrodynamics research. Similarly, the Society for Natural Philosophy meeting brought together leading minds in continuum mechanics and mathematical physics to foster interdisciplinary ideas.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled by the recent announcements that Glasgow

has won the bids to host two major international conferences in 2030:

- ICM 2030 (International Congress of Mathematicians): Widely regarded as the most prestigious gathering in the mathematical world, the ICM is where the famous Fields Medals are awarded. Winning this bid brings the very best in global mathematics to our doorstep.

- ICOTS 2030 (International Conference on Teaching Statistics): Held every four years, ICOTS is the premier global event for statistics education. Hosting it highlights our School's leading role in statistical pedagogy and data science education.

...and I'm sure there will be many more conferences organised between now and 2030.

On a more reflective note, this summer was marked by the very sudden and sad passing of our colleague and former Head of School, Professor Adrian Bowman. Adrian contributed immeasurably to the life, culture, and academic standing of our School over many years. Among his many legacies, the annual Bowman Lecture stands out as a testament to his vision—an event that consistently brings world-class speakers to campus, connects our community, and puts the School and University firmly on the map. He will be deeply missed, and our thoughts remain with his family.

Finally, I want to express my warm thanks to David MacTaggart for all his work as our Newsletter editor. As he steps down from the role and heads off to his new job in Trento, Italy, we wish him the very best! I also want to thank everyone across the School for their hard work over the summer months preparing for the year ahead, and wish you all a successful start to the new semester.

Pet Therapy

For this quarter's moment of relaxation, we have *Claire Miller's Archie*, with a very impressive backdrop.



As a bonus, the Editor was recently visited by Fred the toad.



Fred stayed only for a short time and has continued his travels elsewhere. We wish him well.

Let us know

Thank you to all who contributed to this quarter's Newsletter. Normally I ask you to contact me for news, but this is my last newsletter so please don't send me news. I wish my successor all the very best, whom I expect will be announced shortly.