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Groups St Andrews 2009 in Bath

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INTRODUCTION

Groups St Andrews 2009 was held in the University of Bath from 1 August to 15 August 2009. This was the eighth in the series of Groups St Andrews group theory conferences organised by Colin Campbell and Edmund Robertson of the University of St Andrews. The first three were held in St Andrews, and subsequent conferences held in Galway, Bath and Oxford, before returning to St Andrews in 2005 and to Bath in 2009. There were about 200 mathematicians from 30 countries involved in the meeting as well as some family members and partners. The Scientific Organising Committee of Groups St Andrews 2009 was: Colin Campbell (St Andrews), Martyn Quick (St Andrews), Edmund Robertson (St Andrews), Colva Roney-Dougal (St Andrews), Geoff Smith (Bath), Gunnar Traustason (Bath).

The shape of the conference was similar to the previous conferences (with the exception of Groups St Andrews 1981 and 2005) in that the first week was dominated by five series of talks, each surveying an area of rapid contemporary development in group theory and related areas. The main speakers were Gerhard Hiss (RWTH Aachen), Volodymyr Nekrashevych (Texas A&M), Eamonn O'Brien (Auckland), Mark Sapir (Vanderbilt) and Dan Segal (Oxford). The second week featured three special days, a Cannon/Holt Day, a B H Neumann Day and an Engel Day. The invited speakers at the Cannon/Holt Day included George Havas (Queensland), Claas Roever (Galway) and Marston Conder (Auckland). For the B H Neumann Day, two of his sons, Peter Neumann (Oxford) and Walter Neumann (Columbia, New York), were invited speakers as were Michael Vaughan-Lee (Oxford), Cheryl Praeger (Western Australia) and Gilbert Baumslag (CUNY). For the Engel Day invited speakers included Gunnar Traustason (Bath), Olga Macedońska (Katowice) and Patrizia Longobardi (Salerno). Our thanks are due to Charles Leedham-Green (QMWC, London), Roger Bryant (Manchester) and Gunnar Traustason (Bath) for helping organise the programmes for the special days, and to the speakers on these special days.

Each week contained an extensive programme of research seminars and one-hour invited talks. In the evenings throughout the conference, and during the rest periods, there was an extensive social programme. There were two conference outings. The first was to Stonehenge and Salisbury, and the second was to Stourhead Gardens and Wells. In the first week there was a conference banquet at Cumberwell Golf Club. In the second week there was a wine reception at the American Museum in Britain for the B H Neumann Day and a conference banquet at Bath Racecourse on the Cannon/Holt Day. We wish to thank Charles Leedham-Green for allowing us to publish the after-dinner address that he gave at the banquet. Once again the *Daily Group Theorist* was a nice feature of the conference. We thank the various editors of this, by now traditional, publication.

Once again, we believe that the support of the two main British mathematics societies, the Edinburgh Mathematical Society and the London Mathematical Society

has been an important factor in the success of these conferences. As well as supporting some of the expenses of the main speakers, the grants from these societies were used to support postgraduate students and also participants from Scheme 5 and FSU countries.

As has become the tradition, all the main speakers have written substantial articles for these Proceedings. These articles along with the majority of the other papers are of a survey nature. All papers have been subjected to a formal refereeing process comparable to that of a major international journal. Publishing constraints have forced the editors to exclude some very worthwhile papers, and this is of course a matter of regret. Volume 1 begins with the papers by the main speakers Gerhard Hiss and Volodymyr Nekrashevych. These are followed by those papers whose first-named author begins with a letter in the range A to E. Volume 2 begins with the papers by the main speakers Eamonn O'Brien, Mark Sapir and Dan Segal. These are followed by those papers whose first-named author begins with a letter in the range F to Z.

The next conference in this series will be held in St Andrews in 2013. We are confident that this will be, as usual, a chance to meet many old friends and to make many new friends.

We would like to thank Martyn Quick, Colva Roney-Dougal, Geoff Smith and Gunnar Traustason both for their editorial assistance with these Proceedings and for all their hard work in organising the conference. Our final thanks go not only to the authors of the articles but also to Roger Astley and the rest of the Cambridge University Press team for their assistance and friendly advice throughout the production of these Proceedings.

CMC, EFR