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0521537398 - Groups St Andrews 2001 in Oxford, Volume I

Edited by C. M. Campbell, E. F. Robertson and G. C. Smith

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# Groups St Andrews 2001 in Oxford

## Volume I

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## INTRODUCTION

Groups St Andrews 2001 in Oxford was another highly successful conference in the continuing series. The conference, held from 5 August 2001 to 18 August 2001, was attended by 230 mathematicians from 35 countries. The lectures and talks were given in the Mathematical Institute of the University of Oxford. We thank Lady Margaret Hall, St Anne's College, The Queen's College and Merton College for providing accommodation. We also acknowledge with gratitude the financial support of the Edinburgh and London Mathematical Societies. The Mathematical Institute of the University of Oxford generously made lecture rooms available, and supported the conference in various other important ways.

The organizing committee consisted of C M Campbell (University of St Andrews), D P Groves (Merton), R P Martineau (Wadham), P M Neumann (The Queen's College), E F Robertson (University of St Andrews), G C Smith (University of Bath), W B Stewart (Exeter) and G A Stoy (LMH). Administrative support was provided by Jan Campbell and Maureen White.

The main speakers, who were invited to give a series of talks, were Marston D E Conder (Auckland), Persi Diaconis (Stanford), Peter P Pálffy (Eötvös Loránd, Budapest), Marcus du Sautoy (Cambridge), and Michael R Vaughan-Lee (Oxford). As has become the tradition, all these invited speakers have written substantial articles for these Proceedings. 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.

The Theory of Groups continues to move forward on many fronts, and twenty years on from the announcement of the classification of the finite simple groups, it prospers perhaps surprisingly well (rather like Mark Twain). It is a measure of the success of this conference series and this subject that mathematical libraries around the world are collecting the series of St Andrews Conference Proceedings.

As L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X has become the almost universal typesetting language for mathematics, the nuts and bolts of the editorial job are perhaps getting a little easier. We hope that in future even more contributors will stick faithfully to the typesetting standard prescribed by the editors (so that these hacks will have more time to do research in group theory, lie on beaches and so on). Fran Burstall of the University of Bath provided typesetting counselling. It is hoped that the next conference in this series will be held in 2005 and will be Groups St Andrews in St Andrews (revisiting the scene of the original crime), and it is also hoped that in 2009 we will return once more to Bath.

As these proceedings go to press, news has just arrived that one of the grandfathers of the subject, B H Neumann, has died. He attended the first Groups St Andrews conference in 1981 and some later ones in the series. Many of our community knew him with great affection – his warm smile and shoestring tie will linger in the memory almost as long as his important contributions to mathematics.

CMC, EFR, GCS