

School of Mathematics and Statistics

Newsletter

February 2022

Congratulations ...

- to Ian Durbach and Theoni Photopoulou, both members of CREEM, on the birth of their son, Alexis, born on 26th January. We wish them a long and happy life together.

Alexis with Theoni and Ian



Visitors

- Michael Kagan, a physicist from Penn State University, is visiting Peter Cameron and Rosemary Bailey throughout February to continue their joint research on resistance distance.
- Victoria Gould and Craig Miller from York visited Nik Ruskuc from 7-11th February. They continued their work on congruences and actions of monoids, supported by a joint EPSRC grant.

Visits and Talks

- Rosemary Bailey, Peter Cameron and Sophie Huczynska took part in *SISCO, the St Andrews Interdisciplinary Science Conference*, which was organized by undergraduates from various schools and took place on 5-6th February. Sophie gave a talk on ‘Maths in information security’ and Rosemary gave one on ‘Design and analysis of scientific experiments’.
- On 9-11th February, Saul Freedman attended in person a problem solving retreat organised by the University of Western Australia’s *Centre for the Mathematics of Symmetry and Computation*, held at the Moondyne Convention Centre in Avon Valley National Park. The focus was on interesting open problems in group theory and graph theory.
- Jon Fraser gave an online seminar entitled ‘Intermediate dimensions of infinitely generated self-conformal sets’ at the Queen Mary University of London *Complex Systems Seminar* on 8th February.
- On 10th February, Thomas Neukirch gave a talk in the UK [Solar Online Seminar Series \(UK-SOSS\)](#) entitled ‘Bringing balance to the force: equilibrium models in solar physics’.
- Several members of the School attended the online workshop *Mathematics: Inclusive or Exclusive? Putting colour, culture and context into the curriculum* on 25-26th January. Recordings from the workshop, organised by the LMS, IMA, BSHM, RSS, SIGMA, are now available on the [ICMS website](#). The workshop included [a presentation by Edmund Robertson](#). A number of colleagues have commended the presentation by [Tarik Aougab](#) (Haverford College) on ‘Ethics and anti-racism syllabi for mathematics majors’.

Public Engagement

- Alex Stewart’s recent paper on mathematical modelling of political polarization was covered in the *New York Times* on 26th January in an article ‘[America has split and it’s now in very dangerous territory](#)’ He also discussed ‘The danger of polarised America’ on the National Public Radio (NPR) current affairs programme *All Sides*, and [a recording](#) is available.

Other Activities

- After a long delay due to Covid, a collaborative project between CREEM (David Borchers and Cornelia Oedekoven), two conservation NGOs (Association Anoulak in Laos, and The Rainforest Connection in the USA) and Aarhus University (Mark Johnson, formerly at St Andrews) has restarted, with the [deployment of acoustic detectors in gibbon territory in Laos](#). The project aims to develop a new, more effective method of surveying acoustically active species like gibbons, combining a statistical method developed in St Andrews, new hardware being developed at Aarhus University, and automated call identification methods being developed by The Rainforest Connection. We expect the new hardware to be tested in the Laos field site later this year.

Former Staff

- John Newton, Lecturer in Statistics from 1968 to 1999, died suddenly on 24th January. John's many contributions to the Department of Statistics and then to the School included teaching statistics to medical students, being a very conscientious Examinations Officer for many years (involved in drawing up the Newton-O'Connor table for converting marks to grades), and being an enthusiastic organiser and player of 5-a-side football for staff and postgraduate students. He was also a keen cyclist, owning many bicycles, some of which he kept in the Mathematical Institute.

Next Issue

- The next edition of the School Newsletter will be circulated in March. Items for inclusion may be sent to maths-news@st-andrews.ac.uk at any time but a reminder will be sent out a week before the deadline.