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MEMBERS OF PAST BRITISH IMO TEAMS

A brief summary of the results of the questionnaire sent to all past members of British IMO teams.

77 questionnaires were sent and we received replies from fifty-seven people and heard that one had died, one was untraceable and two were abroad, addresses unknown.

Of the fifty-seven, 55 entered Cambridge colleges and 2 Oxford; all these students started reading Mathematics but three changed to Natural Science, one to Social Science and one to Economics. About 60% obtained 1st class degrees in their first degree and more than half did some higher degree.

Since 34 of the 77 members are still undergraduates or research students, the sample analysed for occupations was much smaller. Of the 31 replies 11 are in academic jobs: including Lecturers at Bath, Edinburgh and Swansea; 11 are in Central or Local Government including an economist at the Treasury, a member of the Kent Police force and the Diplomatic Corps. Many are in operational research whilst 10 are in business - mostly in actuarial or computing fields. More than half are using 'applied' rather than 'pure' mathematics.

When asked their opinions on why they were successful at mathematics, most of them said it was a combination of innate ability, pleasure in solving problems and the encouragement of both parents and gifted teachers. Also most of the members had very much enjoyed being in the IMO team; some said it was the most exciting experience they had had but one or two thought they would have benefitted from some training sessions and others felt that the questions were unduly biased towards pure mathematics. One member queried why there were never any girls in the team; a phenomenon noticed in other countries besides Britain.

It is hoped that a fuller report may be produced later and that another survey may be carried out in another 10 years.

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Contests.