Editorial

The British Mathematics Colloquium is an annual conference on diverse areas of pure mathematics, taking place at rotating venues around the United Kingdom. Once every five years, this conference takes place together with the applied mathematics analogue, the British Applied Mathematics Colloquium. This combined conference is, by a large margin, the biggest regular event on the British mathematics calendar. It boasts public, plenary, and keynote talks by eminent mathematicians, specialised parallel sessions spanning a broad range of modern mathematics, poster sessions, plenary discussions on topics of relevance to professional mathematicians, stands by companies, journals, mathematical societies, and other institutions, social events, and more.

The BMC-BAMC 2020 was due to take place in Glasgow in April of 2020. The organising committee had worked for 2 years on preparing what promised to be a fabulous event, and put enormous effort into it. To give but one example, it was due to include the probably unprecedented social event of a conference dinner and cèilidh in the iconic Kelvingrove Museum and Gallery. If you do not know the building, then it is worth looking it up on the internet in order to picture what an event this would have been. And if you do not know what a cèilidh is, then that is also well worth looking up! As the reader will have guessed by now, a lot of that work ended up being in vain, as the world was engulfed in a pandemic of a scale that will find not many rivals in human history.

The event was cancelled/postponed at short notice, and immediately the organisers set to work on moving the entire event, with almost 1000 registered participants, online. Needless to say, the cèilidh in Kelvingrove Museum did not survive that move. Despite that sacrifice, and many others, the conference that did end up taking place in 2021 was a fantastic event, with virtual spaces doing as much as modern technology can do to encourage interaction in-between the talks, with poster exhibitions and panel discussions, and with a large number of fabulous talks. The organising committee and the administrative staff at the ICMS did a monumental job in essentially organising two very different huge mathematical events, and making the one that did end up taking place a big success.

The special issue of the Glasgow Mathematical Journal consists entirely of contributions by speakers at the BMC-BAMC 2021, and serves as a showcase of the breadth and superb mathematical quality of that conference. Still – and I am sure everybody concerned will agree with me – may we never need to do again what the organisers of the BMC-BAMC 2021 and the staff at ICMS managed to pull off so impressively!