

Recent Mathematical Stamps: 2006

Antikythera mechanism

The Antikythera mechanism is a remarkable arrangement of gears, used for calculations in astronomy. Originating from about the second century BC, it was recovered around 1900 in a shipwreck off the Greek island of Antikythera. Its intricate mechanism has been compared with those of medieval Swiss timepieces dating from 1500 years later.

Curta calculator

The Curta calculator, the earliest mechanical pocket calculator, was invented by Curt Herzstark while imprisoned in the Second World War concentration camp at Buchenwald. After the War, he went to Liechtenstein and the first 500 calculators went on sale there in 1948. They can add, subtract, multiply and divide to 11 digits, and can be used to calculate square and cube roots.

František Jakob Gerstner (1756–1832)

František Gerstner was a Bohemian mathematician and engineer. After a period as professor of mathematics at the

University of Vienna, he joined a government commission on technical education in Austrian higher institutions, and was later appointed professor of mechanics and hydraulics at what is now the Czech Technical University in Prague. His textbooks include a *Theory of Waves* and a *Handbook of Mechanics*.

ICM2006, Madrid

In August 2006, the International Congress of Mathematicians, held every four years, took place in Madrid and was attended by over 4500 participants. The Fields Medals were awarded by the King of Spain to Terence Tao, Andrej Okounkov, Wendelin Werner, and Grigory Perelman, the last of whom declined to receive it.

Grigore Moisil (1906–1973)

Grigore Moisil is commonly regarded as the father of computer science in Romania. After studying in Bucharest, Paris, and Rome, he returned to Romania to take up teaching posts in Iași and Bucharest. His research areas were algebra, mathematical logic, and differential equations, and he is remembered in the Łucasiewicz–Moisil algebra.

Snowflake

The delicate structure of a snowflake has six-fold rotational symmetry, and no two snowflakes have ever been found that are the same. Their hexagonal form was recognized by the Chinese in the second century and was later investigated by Johannes Kepler and René Descartes, among others.



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➤ Please send all submissions to the Stamp Corner Editor, Robin Wilson, Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology, The Open University, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, England e-mail: r.j.wilson@open.ac.uk