"Doing Mathematics online, and in the open"

Professor Tim Gowers

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7.30 p.m., Monday 9th May, 2011
WOLFSON LECTURE THEATRE, CHURCHILL COLLEGE
Storey's Way, Cambridge

About this lecture:

Professor Gowers writes:

"Mathematics is typically thought of as a solitary pursuit, and indeed it often is:
a mathematician may work for years on a problem, telling nobody about the work until
the problem is solved.

However, this way of operating is inefficient in many ways, and the internet has recently
provided the opportunity to experiment with many new ways of working.

I shall describe an experiment that I conducted, the aim of which was to solve a
mathematics problem in the open, on the internet, and with the help of anybody who was
interested in participating."

About the speaker:

Timothy Gowers was born in Marlborough in 1963. He was a chorister in the
King's College Choir, then a King's Scholar at Eton, before going to Trinity College
Cambridge to read mathematics.

He has been at Cambridge for all but six of the years between then and now. He is
currently a Royal Society Research Professor.

In 1998 he was awarded a Fields Medal.

The Organising Secretary adds….

It is always faintly risky inviting someone to speak on mathematics. This is the second such lecture this year – you will remember the 'Mathematics of Complex Systems' by Ray Goldstein, which was delivered at the Møller Centre. It was a great success, and I am sure that this lecture will be as engaging, and just as accessible to the layman.

Professor Gowers initiated the Polymath 1 project, which used the internet to allow mathematicians from everywhere to work on a solution for a specific problem.

I have the 'little book' (see above), which is excellent. A reviewer on Amazon wrote of it:

> "I have bought several books in the "Very Short Introduction..." series all of which have been excellent and this one in particular is extremely clear and interesting. The book is aimed at the intelligent layperson and introduces what maths really is and how professional mathematicians think about it. This approach is in contrast to most people's experience in school where tedious and repetitive calculation is the norm. Various areas in maths are looked at and the ideas behind them are explained rather than the reader being hit with big formulae and funny looking symbols."

Come along, and prepare to be dazzled!

Coffee and biscuits are will be available in the Wolfson Foyer from around 7pm until the start of the lecture.

Best Regards
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Organising Secretary
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