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Book Review

Title: 1089 and all that: a journey into mathematics
Author: David Acheson

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This delightful little volume is a mystery tour through some of the highlights of mathematics, both classical and contemporary. The small hardback volume, a format which has become popular for recreational mathematics and science books, opens with a chapter on Acheson's personal relationship with "the 1089 trick". The book continues with geometry and the obligatory graphical proof of Pythagoras' Theorem. Calculus, graph theory, the constants e and π , through to modern applications, all squeeze into subsequent chapters. In addition to explanations of mathematical results themselves, the book also presents motivations for topics such as algebra and proof. The book closes with a chapter on the inverted linked pendulum, which Acheson has researched, and a finally a rationale for the imaginary numbers.

The style is chatty and crisp, and almost every page contains illustrations, which are well drawn and highly varied. Graphs, diagrams, photographs and cartoons support and enhance the text. In fact, the book itself is very short, and therefore does not contain much detail. However it doesn't set out to, and at least it does contain the appropriate equations where necessary. In fact, the author includes a lot of real mathematics if one cares to look closely, and the book is certainly not superficial. One is left with a slightly exasperating feeling that one

wanted more: if that is true of all its readers then it is indeed a great success.

Why should a mathematician be interested in such a book? One reason is certainly that this is an excellent resource for those who wish to find inspiration for a school talk, open day presentation or master class. You probably also know someone who might like to borrow it.