

A Scholar, a Dinner and an Enigma

Head Scholar, Xanthe Jones, recounts her excitement at hearing Dr James Grime speak at the Academic Scholars' Dinner

Dr James Grime. I would be lying if I said that I wasn't extremely excited when I found out that he was to be this year's guest for the Scholars' Dinner. As a major maths nerd I have been known to spend a large chunk of my free time watching many of his videos on Numberphile, a YouTube channel he is part of. In fact, I started writing this article while watching his video about Superhero Triangles, because everyone knows the only way to improve superheroes is to add some maths.

It wouldn't be too far from the truth to say that Dr Grime is a part of the reason I am now looking to pursue a higher education and a career within the realm of maths. Two years ago, I attended MathsFest with the school, where Dr Grime did a talk about the maths of code-breaking. He mentioned a book, called the Code Book, which I later read, and I guess the rest is history. I sit here, about two years (and a week) after meeting him for the first time, having just spent a wonderful evening at last night's Scholars' Dinner with him.

His talk started on the wonders of Enigma, with an original Second World War machine to help. He showed us how to encode, and then decode messages, emphasising the importance of the setup of the wires within the machine, followed by an explanation of how these machines work, which all boiled down to "batteries and lights". He gave a brief overview of the history behind the enigma and her decoding.

The talk was concluded with a sneak peek of an upcoming NumberPhile video, all about organising different elements into grids so each element appears in each row and column exactly once, like in a sudoku. The main crux of this was how many different elements could be fit into a grid, so that not only did each element appear exactly once in each row and column, but also each combination of elements was in a square exactly once. These are a group of problems with over two millennia worth of history of proof, proofs being disproved, and rich mathematical dispute and discussion, and Dr Grime managed to put it across in a simple and engaging way, engaging all those from the

so-called "super-maths table" (on which I was sitting), to those who would prefer to focus their studies a little further outside the realm of mathematics.

Dr Grime is a hugely enthusiastic mathematician and presenter, and I hope that not only my fellow maths nerds but also all of the scholars who attended last night's dinner found his

talk as engaging and thought provoking as I did. Code is all around us, and whether you know the mathematics behind it or not, we all use it. I hope you all enjoyed the dinner as much as I did, and perhaps you'll even find yourself joining me on the NumberPhile YouTube page to see the video we got a sneak peak of (he explains it a lot better than I did), as well as a whole host of other things.

Overall, last night's talk, and indeed the whole evening, complete with mathematical questions to complete amongst our tables which even got people wondering what my favourite subject is (I won't make a comment on that at this time...), served as a reminder to the true nature of scholarship. At its heart, it is about exploring new ideas, pushing your learning to a new depth, or tackling something you always wanted to know. Scholarship is finding the passion for learning, and I hope that Dr Grime let all of us at the dinner feel that passion. That said, scholarship is not just for those who attended the Scholars' Dinner; it is for all of us. Once again, therefore, I find myself urging you all to seek your passion in learning, and to find what, or who, inspires you. For me, it was Dr Grime, both two years ago and last night. Therefore, I hope that everyone can be driven by this to do just that; find your passion, find your inspiration, and find your own 'scholar ship' in which in which you can navigate your success.



Can you crack this Caesar Shift?

ZJOVSHY

"THE LAST WORD", WITH THIS EDITION'S SCHOLAR...

Here at RHS we're incredibly lucky to have amazing and dedicated teachers and members of staff who organise and run the vast array of extra-curricular activities the school has to offer. When I joined in year 7, I was dazzled by the diverse range of activities and wanted to try everything, so I signed up for an activity every lunchtime and evening, and even one before school - 11 in total! OK, so 11 clubs was a bit much to juggle around prep and other commitments but the amazing thing about all these activities is it allows us to broaden our horizons, try new things, develop new passions, meet pupils from different years and make friends with shared interests who we might not otherwise have met. At the recent house drama event, I had the pleasure of being able to use skills developed at Backstage Drama Tech, and MUN has allowed me to visit conferences at other schools, developing a greater understanding of world affairs and public speaking skills. So at the next activities fair, why not step out of your comfort zone and try something different, who knows where it might lead?

- Oliver (Year 9)

