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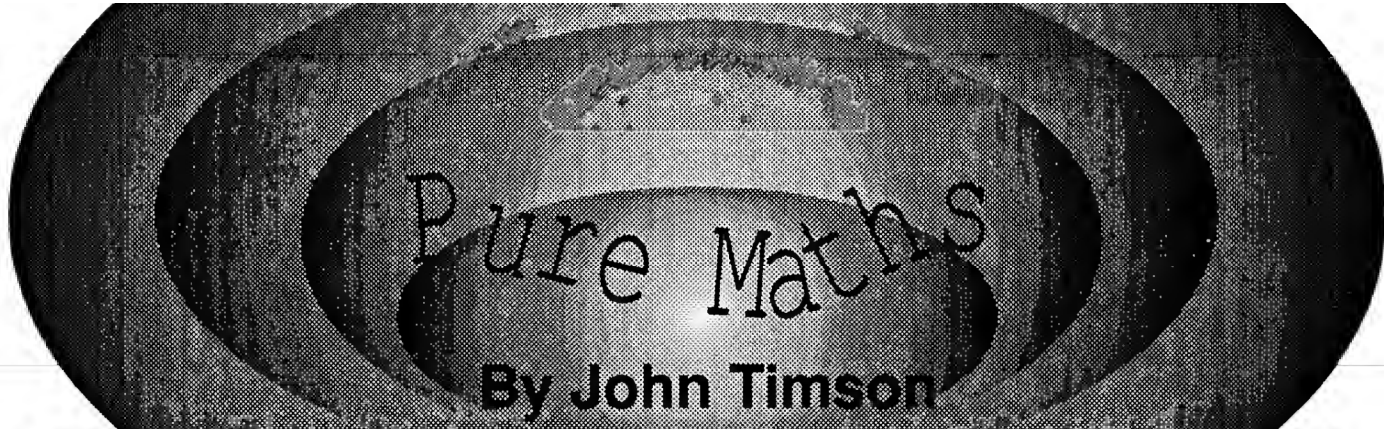
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**O**n a fine August day in the year 2005 Jacob Apfel, Nobel Laureate and the man acknowledged by nearly everyone as the world's greatest living mathematician, was awakened by his autoalarm at six in the evening. He was slightly surprised because he'd thought he'd set it for eight in the morning. Once again it seemed he'd got it wrong.

Everyone who knew him agreed that Jacob was a genius at pure maths. They also agreed that he might well be the world's biggest duffer when it came to using any kind of machine, even one as simple as an autoalarm. It was fortunate that he had the latest kind of computer which responded to his voice because the use of a simple keyboard was almost beyond him.

The world's greatest living mathematician yawned and reached for the glass of lemon tea his autoalarm had made.

*Time.* He'd got it wrong yet again. *Time is a funny thing*, Jacob muttered to himself, sipping the tea. A dimension you couldn't travel in and so different in a fundamental way from the other three of our universe. Which seemed illogical to Jacob even though he knew well enough the obvious objections to time travel. If you went back in time you could kill your grandfather as a child and then you'd never have existed but you did exist so the idea was logically impossible.

Forgetting his tea and everything else Jacob began to wonder about it. He liked to think nothing was impossible, just that the maths were sometimes difficult. For other people at least. *Suppose*, he thought, *that time travel is truly impossible for living things because they arise in temporal order from other living organisms? That wouldn't necessarily mean it applied to non-living things, would it? Of course*, he reasoned, *there would be no way to send things forward into a time which didn't yet exist. But back? Into a time which did exist because it had already happened. That might just be possible.* The outlines of some equations began to run through his mind.

**F**or nearly five days Jacob worked at his computer without sleep until at last he was satisfied he'd solved the problem. He had a mathematical proof that it was possible, in pure maths at least, to send non-living objects back in time. A neat bit of work and quite interesting in a way, he thought, as he told the computer to send the results to the *Journal of Twenty-first Century Maths*. Then the world's greatest living mathematician went to bed. He forgot to reset his autoalarm.

**M**ark Foreman, the editor of the *Journal*, was one of the laziest men in the world. When he became editor he spent three weeks reprogramming the *Journal's* computer so that it did nearly all his work for him. The computer received up to a hundred papers a day direct from scientists around the world. It sorted them by key words in the titles and eventually put together enough to fill the next weekly issue. So every Wednesday Mark would go in to his office for an hour or less where he had little more to do than press the go-ahead key and the issue would be sent out by computer network and on tapes or discs for those with primitive computers. There was also a small printed edition for some backward libraries.

Jacob's paper, which he'd called "*A Mathematical Exposition of the Possibility of Small Scale Time Travel into the Past*", was never seen by Mark. It was automatically rejected by his computer on the basis of the key words "Time Travel" which Mark had long before decided was mystical nonsense. His subscribers wouldn't have read it anyway since almost all of them shared his opinion.

Two floors below Mark's offices were the much less prestigious ones of *Future Science and Technology*. Once a small, unimpor-

tant quarterly, in the last five years under the editorship of Susanne Lettice *Future* had developed into an influential monthly. In the scientific world it was widely recognised that *Future's* forecasts were often remarkably accurate. It was almost as if Susanne had a direct line into the future. She hadn't. What she did have was a line into Mark's computer which was almost as good.

When the title of Jacob's paper came up on her screen Susanne thought, "*Another idiot*", and her finger moved to the reject key. Then it stopped as she realised who the author was. Jacob Apfel was writing about time travel as if he believed it possible. *Was the world's greatest living mathematician going crazy?* Such things had happened before and if he was then *Future's* readers should be the first to know. Her finger moved two keys right to PRINT. She began to read.

Susanne was not a mathematician in Jacob's class or anywhere near, as she admitted even to herself. But she did have a knack of knowing what could, and what could not, be translated into useable hardware and it was this gift as much as her line into Mark's computer which had made her a success as *Future's* editor. Like many other successful people, however, she wanted more and above all she wanted to be famous. So when she realised to her surprise that Jacob's theory could be used to build a machine using only easily obtainable components she had an idea.

Susanne knew that the *Journal's* computer would reject Jacob's paper and that he would forget all about it. She also knew she could build the machine. If she rewrote the paper putting her name on it and sent it back to when she'd just left university 25 years earlier then she'd become famous, at least in mathematical circles. If the machine worked and she used it on her editor's desk then the paper, her paper now, would arrive in the right place when the first editor of *Future* was looking for new material. That afternoon Susanne began to buy the components she'd need.

**P**ete Stephandou, the first editor of *Future*, was a sour, embittered man who'd only taken the job because he'd been unable to get anything better. Life, he felt, had treated him badly; he'd never somehow had the recognition he believed was his due. He was still looking for a way to make his name when he saw Susanne's paper and then he realised this was his big chance. If he could build a time machine and send the paper back to 1950, but with his name on it, then at last fame and fortune would be his.

It took Peter longer to get the right components and he had to have some specially made. When he'd assembled it he found that it worked, even though it was larger than he'd expected. His problem was to get it to the right place at the right time. He typed his version of the paper out on an old typewriter, sealed it in an envelope addressed to the old and long established *Solutions in Maths Journal*, bought some stamps of the right period from a stamp dealer, and it was ready to be sent.

Peter knew that, fortunately for him, the post office had been in the same building for over half a century. He took his machine down to the post office one night and persuaded the man in charge to let him run it there. Peter told him that the machine was measuring variations in the Earth's magnetic flux affected by the ozone layer, which meant nothing to the post office man who assumed that it was somehow government research.

**P**eter's envelope flipped back through time to 1950 where it was found on the post office floor and taken to the sorting room. Two days later it arrived on the desk of *Solutions'* editor, D. Geoffrey Meadowcroft. He soon realised that the ma-



chine could be made, and as an ex-army communications officer he had no trouble in getting most of the components. The others he had to make himself and his machine when he'd finished filled a small truck, but it worked.

The famous paper "A Mathematical Proof of the Possibility of Time Travel" by D. Geoffrey Meadowcroft was published in *Theoretical Physics and Unusual Mathematics* in October, 1926. An editorial comment praised Meadowcroft for his ingenious use of pure maths but said there was, of course, no possibility of any practical application. Everyone knew it was just not possible to build a time machine. The Meadowcroft Equations, as they came to be known in the world of pure maths, were just a curiosity. An interesting example of how something could be proved on paper even when it was impossible in the real world. Now and then over the years some young and eager mathematician would try to find a fallacy in the proof because, as everyone knew, there had to be one somewhere. But no one ever succeeded in finding it.

Meadowcroft enjoyed his small fame in the maths world. Peter and Susanne were puzzled. They each felt they'd been cheated but they couldn't see what they could do about it. They also had a strange feeling that they'd known about the Meadowcroft Equations before they'd sent their papers off into the past. It was a paradox neither cared to think about too much. Jacob Apfel, of course, had forgotten about it. For him once a problem was solved that was that.

**O**n a cloudy day in September in the year 2005 Jacob Apfel, the world's greatest living mathematician, was awakened by his autoalarm at three in the morning. As he sipped his lemon tea he wondered about the nature of time. Which naturally led him to think about the Meadowcroft Equations and he couldn't see why they only applied to sending things back in time. It seemed to Jacob that with some manipulation of the basic ideas forwards time travel should be theoretically possible. He switched on his computer and started work.

*The world was never the same again.*

## JOHN TIMSON

John Timson is a biologist and science writer who likes to explore the logical consequences of something that scientific opinion says is "impossible" becoming possible.



## FRONT COVER AND CENTRE SPREAD TONY TODD

Tony works from his home in an Edwardian cottage in Surrey. He renounces the idea of a personalised style and will work in any medium that is appropriate to the subject matter. He is kept busy by an assortment of book and magazine publishers, but is just as ready to handle SF and horror or cats and thatched cottages.



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