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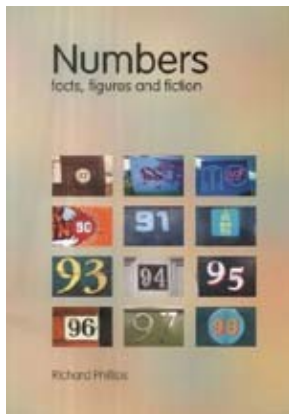
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Reviews

'Numbers: facts, figures and fiction'

reviewed by Helen Joyce



Numbers: facts, figures and fiction

By Richard Phillips

This charming book is in its second edition (the first was published in 1994). It is about integers, with a short section for each number between 1 and 200, and a line for each between 201 and 999. There are "boxes" for interesting facts and definitions, such as "perfect number", and a few "large numbers" also make the cut, including 1729, the subject of a famous anecdote about Hardy and Ramanujan, and 10^{1000} , the googol. The book finishes with two pages about infinity, and then "hints, answers and more questions".

It is full of pictures, and the facts about numbers range from legal (16 is the age of consent) to incidental (44 is the international dialling code for the UK) to purely mathematical (30 is a pyramidal number) to deliciously irrelevant (forty is the only English number to have all its letters in alphabetical order). The text is littered with questions, and the book would make a lovely complement to David Wells' "Dictionary of curious and interesting numbers".

If the foundation of mathematical ability and pleasure is a close acquaintance with the first few numbers, then this book has a part to play in laying those foundations. And if you are well past the foundations stage, you should still enjoy dipping in and out of this attractive volume.

'Numbers: facts, figures and fiction'

Book details:

Numbers: facts, figures and fiction

Richard Phillips

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