# GALOIS

1811 - 1832

First things first: we must pronounce ‘Galois’ as ‘Gal–WAH’ because he was French. In fact, Evariste Galois was born near Paris, to a well-to-do family, and turned out to be the unluckiest mathematician ever (probably). His family sent him to a particularly dismal boarding school in the city and he was so unhappy that he became a rather naughty boy. His teachers thought that he was argumentative and rude so they demoted him and he did not get the education that he deserved.

But at the age of 17, Galois met a top-quality teacher who encouraged him to present his superb mathematical discoveries to the Academy of Sciences. Sadly, on the first occasion his papers were lost and forgotten by Cauchy (great mathematician – dreadful organisational skills). On the second occasion, Galois was being questioned about his maths by an examiner when he became frustrated and threw a board rubber at the man. It hit him on the forehead and Evariste was thrown out for good.

His opportunity blown, and suffering the sadness of his father’s suicide, Galois joined a revolutionary group in France. (The French were always revolting at this time so he had no difficulties here.) However, bad luck struck again when our friend Evariste was thrown into prison for possessing a knife (which was only used for cutting his chicken!) He used the time in gaol to do lots more maths, and it was at this time that he founded modern ‘group theory’ – which is very important, but rather complicated.

Evariste Galois suffered his final dose of misfortune on the same day that he was released from prison: two thugs started picking on him, one of them claiming that Galois had been trying to steal his girlfriend (even though Evariste had never met the girl). He was challenged to a duel the next morning and foolishly he agreed to attend. That evening, Galois scribbled down everything that he had ever investigated in maths, and sent it to his friend, Chevalier (who was not a horse). The next morning Galois was shot and killed. He was just 20 years old and died for the most trivial of reasons.