# ARCHIMEDES

287 BC – 212 BC

Archimedes, the greatest mathematician of ancient times, was born in Syracuse, a Greek colony on Sicily. The ruler of the day was King Herion and he was not really terribly clever, but fortunately for Syracuse, Archimedes was available to solve all the problems the king faced. Archimedes was so incredibly inventive that it is difficult to fit much of it on this one page.

The first time he rose to fame was when King Herion had a ship built that was too heavy to get out of the docks and into the sea. After having a bit of a giggle at the king’s stupidity, Archimedes made a clever contraption out of wooden cogs, pulleys and levers. The machine allowed one man to launch the massive ship, while still sitting in his chair relaxing with a cool drink. It all worked due to Archimedes famous study of levers (see the quote below!)

Perhaps the most practical of Archimedes’ inventions was the water screw, or *cochilas*. When put into water at an angle and turned, with the minimum of effort it drew the water up out of rivers, mines or the occasional sinking ship. Today it is used in cement mixers. Turn it one way and it mixes, turn it the other way and it empties without the need for a tipping mechanism. Brilliant!

Archimedes is most famous for investigating buoyancy and the displacement of water. He had been stuck with a problem for some time, and then solved it as he got into the bath and all the water sloshed out. He was so excited that he ran down the road completely naked, shouting ‘Eureka, Eureka!’ (meaning, ‘I have found it’.)

Archimedes was brilliant when it came to fighting the Romans too. They often tried to sail over and invade, but Archimedes came up with so many wacky weapons that they ended up terrified of the place. There were massive catapults that hurled boulders through oncoming ships and mirrors that reflected the sunlight onto ships, making them erupt into flames before they even got close! Best of all was a huge crane that reached over the wall, lifted ships up, shook them around and then dropped them back into the water – often upside-down!

Sadly, one day while a feast was going on, the Romans sneaked in. Archimedes didn’t notice, as he was busy drawing circles in the sand for his latest mathematical theorem. A Roman soldier walked across his drawings and Archimedes was furious. ‘Don’t tread on my circles’, he shouted. The soldier was so incensed, that he stabbed the mathematician. So died the greatest genius in Greek history.

Archimedes Top Quote About Levers

‘Give me a place to stand, and I shall move the earth.’