



Christopher Zeeman Medal 2026

Citation for Alex Bellos

The London Mathematical Society and Institute for Mathematics and its Applications awards the 2026 Christopher Zeeman Medal to Alex Bellos.

Among maths communicators, Alex is unique in having a journalistic background. This brings a fresh viewpoint to the subject and has enabled him to reach audiences that do not normally take an interest in mathematics. His first popular mathematics book, *Alex's Adventures in Numberland*, spent four months in the top ten of the *Sunday Times* nonfiction bestseller list. The sequel, inevitably called *Alex Through the Looking-Glass*, fared similarly. He has since written several more popular books on maths, including two colouring books and four puzzle books, selling more than a million copies overall. His approach to mathematics is informal, amusing and compelling.

Since 2015, he has written a mathematical puzzles column for *The Guardian* newspaper. Each puzzle receives around 100,000 views, and the column has become one of the longest running and most watched of its kind. Alex has also made it a free resource for schools. His maths blog won the Association of British Science Writers' award for 2016 Blogger of the Year.

Alex appears regularly on the YouTube channel Numberphile, where two of his videos top the list for number of views. 'The Scientific Way to Cut A Cake' has had over 17 million views, and 'Elliptical Pool Table' more than 10 million views. This features a pool table he made himself to demonstrate important and unusual properties of the ellipse, related – surprisingly – to frontier issues in mathematical physics. Importantly, these videos are not passive presentations: they model mathematical inquiry, surprise, and playfulness, encouraging viewers to see mathematics as something they can engage with themselves.

He has been active on radio, making documentaries such as 'Land of the Rising Sums', recorded in Japan and discussing the abacus. He appears frequently on BBC programmes such as *Today* on Radio 4 and *Arts & Ideas* on Radio 3. He captained the Corpus Christi College, Oxford alumni team on Christmas University Challenge in December 2023, reaching the final.

Alex travels the UK, giving inspiring and fascinating talks on maths to school teachers and students, at science festivals, in Maths Hubs, at universities, and at many other venues. His book series on football for children aged 7-13 includes a lot more maths than they may anticipate.

Alex holds a degree in Mathematics and Philosophy from Oxford University, so his popular work rests on sound mathematical foundations. He has helped to shape the contemporary landscape of public mathematical culture in the UK, demonstrating that engagement with the public is not peripheral to mathematics, but integral to it.