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Scottish genius James Clerk Maxwell to receive recognition in city of his birth

A statue recognising the achievements of James Clerk Maxwell is to be unveiled tomorrow Tuesday 25th November at one o'clock. It will be the first statue to be put up in George Street, Edinburgh in almost a century. Produced by Paisley-based Sculptor, Alexander Stoddart and commissioned by The Royal Society of Edinburgh, the monument will be unveiled by the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, Alex Fergusson, MSP at the East end of George Street. An international conference exploring the contribution and legacy of James Clerk Maxwell is being held in The Royal Society of Edinburgh on the day to mark this occasion. The Edinburgh Academy Pipe Band will play at the unveiling ceremony (Maxwell was a pupil of Edinburgh Academy).

Our modern technological society, from the computer to telecommunications, rests firmly on the foundations established by James Clerk Maxwell. It was Clerk Maxwell's emphasis on the basic role of fields of force that led Einstein to his general theory of relativity and the modern understanding of gravity.

Born in Edinburgh's India Street, Clerk Maxwell was a modest Scot who died aged 48. For a scientist of his stature, there are few memorials to him. In 2006, the 175th anniversary of Clerk Maxwell's birth raised his profile in his home city and the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), of which Maxwell had been a Fellow, initiated plans for a statue of him. Clerk Maxwell is featured on a stamp in Mexico has a mountain range named after him on Venus and a crater on the moon, but until now there has been no statue of him in his city of birth.

The immediate Past President of the RSE, Sir Michael Atiyah commented, "It is quite remarkable that there is not more recognition of James Clerk Maxwell in either the public consciousness of great scientists or indeed until now in the shape of a permanent monument in his home city. Albert Einstein recognised Maxwell's contribution when he said '*One scientific epoch ended and another began with James Clerk Maxwell*'. I earnestly hope that, as well as being recognised as an excellent sculpture by Alexander Stoddart, the statue also leads more people to become aware of the massive contribution of James Clerk Maxwell."

"I would also wish to thank the City of Edinburgh Council for their support and co-operation, the many donors who have made today possible, and my successor as President, Lord Wilson of Tillyorn for hosting today's event and conference."

The Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, Alex Fergusson MSP, said: "In Scotland's Parliament, we are only too aware of the many great men and women of our past - the Scottish ambassadors and their amazing discoveries who helped to shape the modern world. I believe this statue will inspire many of those passing it here on George Street and will stand as a fitting memorial for very many years to come."

Adam Wilkinson, Director of Edinburgh World Heritage added: "I am very pleased that we were able to support this valuable project honouring one of the city's most eminent scientists. The deep intellectual vein that runs through the city is one of the foundations of Edinburgh's UNESCO World Heritage status, and James Clerk Maxwell's contribution to science alone is recognised around the world. The project will reawaken the public's memory of this forgotten city hero and through the highest quality of public art, raise the bar for public realm projects in the World Heritage Site."

The Lord Provost of Edinburgh George Grubb, who will be one of the guests of honour, said, "The completion and unveiling of this wonderful gift to the city is a credit to all those who tirelessly raised funds and to those contributed to its creation. James Clerk Maxwell's work made a huge impact both in his own field and on the wider world so it is fitting that this monument to the man should take pride of place in such a wonderful location."

Further information:

The funding for the statue project has been raised from a broad range of private, charitable and commercial bodies, including many individual donors. The main supporters are:

Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh
 Standard Life
 David & Elaine Potter Charitable Foundation
 Edinburgh World Heritage
 Royal Bank of Scotland
 James Clerk Maxwell Foundation
 Darwin Trust of Edinburgh
 Michael Atiyah
 Irwin & Joan Jacobs
 James & Jean Rautio
 Royal Society
 Royal Society of Edinburgh
 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
 Institute of Physics
 Royal Society of Chemistry
 London Mathematical Society
 Edinburgh Mathematical Society
 University of Edinburgh
 University of Aberdeen
 Kings College, London
 Trinity College, Cambridge

Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge
Heriot-Watt University
The Institute of Mathematics and Its Applications

The project was facilitated for the RSE by its connected charity RSE Scotland Foundation.

About the RSE

The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) is an educational charity, registered in Scotland. Independent and non-party-political, our wide-ranging educational activities include:

- Organising lectures, debates and conferences
- Conducting major independent inquiries
- Providing educational activities for school students throughout Scotland
- Distributing over £2 million to top researchers and entrepreneurs
- Showcasing to the World the best of our research and development
- Increasing two-way international exchanges
- Encouraging, promoting and rewarding excellence
- Offering state-of-the-art conference facilities
- Publishing internationally respected learned journals

The RSE was founded in 1783 by Royal Charter for the “Advancement of Learning and Useful Knowledge”. It is regarded as Scotland’s National Academy of Science and Letters. Today it has around 1500 Fellows whose expertise encompasses the full spectrum of the sciences, medicine, engineering and technology, education, law, the arts, humanities, social sciences, business, industry, the professions and public service. This multi-disciplinary perspective makes the RSE unique amongst the United Kingdom’s learned societies. It is funded by a range of carefully selected charitable, public and private bodies. Its mission today is providing public benefit through the advancement of learning and useful knowledge. The Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scotland’s National Academy, is Scottish Charity No.SC000470. The RSE Scotland foundation is Scottish Charity SC024636.

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