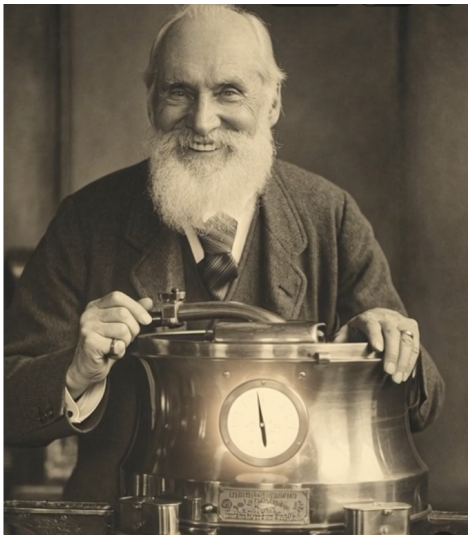
East Lothian Antiquarian & Field Naturalists' Society

Beacon of Brilliance: Lord Kelvin and the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

A 200 Year Legacy of Genius and Symbiosis

by Professor Javier Martin-Torres



Lord Kelvin

The Society is delighted to present this talk by Professor Javier Martin-Torres at 2.30 PM, Saturday, 12th December, 2026.

Please note that the venue will be at Holy Trinity Church, Church Street, Haddington, **EH41 3EX**

Professor Javier Martin-Torres, Chair Professor of Planetary Sciences and Astrobiology, Northumbria University**.**

Professor Martín-Torres is a NASA award-winning theoretical physicist with interdisciplinary research interests, including astrobiology, planetary sciences, the emergence of life, as well as space and weather hardware development. He has 25 years of experience working on space missions. He is the Principal Investigator of the HABIT instrument to produce liquid water on Mars and co-Investigator of the Curiosity and ExoMars missions. He boasts an extensive international career, including NASA, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the California Institute of Technology and the Lunar and Planetary Institute.

Talk summary

Approximately 202 years after his birth on 26 June 1824, William Thomson, aka Lord Kelvin, remains one of the most luminous figures in the history of science. The talk will trace his extraordinary journey from a ten-year-old university student in Glasgow to the Second Wrangler at Cambridge, and ultimately to the Chair of Natural Philosophy at the University of Glasgow, which he held for an astonishing 53 years. Kelvin's revolutionary contributions to thermodynamics, the dissipation of energy, vortex motion, and countless other fields fundamentally reshaped our understanding of the physical world and laid the foundations of modern physics and engineering.

At the heart of the story lies his profound, lifelong relationship with the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE). Elected as a Fellow in 1847 and subsequently serving three terms as President, Kelvin used the Society as his primary platform for presenting seminal papers: from his 1849 exposition of Carnot's theory to groundbreaking work on heat (establishing the Kelvin scale), capillary action, and spherical harmonics. Additionally he greatly elevated the RSE's standing in areas of government liaison, publication standards and public engagement.

Knighted in 1866 and elevated to the peerage in 1892, Lord Kelvin's influence extended far beyond academia. After his death in 1907, the Society's enduring gratitude was and still is remembered.

Through archival insights, rare images, and personal anecdotes, this talk celebrates the perfect symbiosis of individual genius and institutional prestige - showing how one man's brilliance and one Society's support together advanced science and humanity for generations to come.

Members can expect a remarkable story of a remarkable man.

For any enquiries contact: info@eastlothianantiquarians.org.uk

Non members welcome with a modest cash donation appreciated

Church parking is limited to Blue Badge holders plus otherwise mobility compromised

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