

# The man who changed everything

Christine De Luca

*James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), Scottish mathematical physicist  
Statue by Alexander Stoddart, in George Street, Edinburgh*

This statue is fitting for a modest Scotsman  
whose learning lay lightly on his shoulders;  
who looked up through nature to describe  
the hidden numbers holding it together;  
predicted and proved the less than obvious:  
unseen worlds, force fields, the planets.  
His was the plinth on which Einstein built.

The bronze of Maxwell is quiet and reflective;  
neo-classical, unshowy. One of his Tobys has  
pride of place; the dog privy to his master's  
ruminating about vision, physiology of sight,  
but wise enough to see that his was different.  
Perhaps he was a canine expert on Saturn's rings;  
the one that salivated at the thought that light

is an electro-magnetic wave; that barked loudly  
when the fourth equation brought it all together.  
His owner's gentle eye and ample beard are caught,  
the slight academic stoop, the romantic heart.  
Clay is a hard taskmaster, the sculptor said,  
but you'd never guess. And you'd never think  
Maxwell was the man who changed everything.

*The statue was commissioned in 2006 by the Royal Society of Edinburgh*