

# Bibliography of Peter Guthrie Tait

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Tait's biographer, Knott, catalogues some 365 papers, articles, laboratory notes, reviews and obituaries, together with two volumes of collected papers. The books which Tait wrote, in whole or in part, are also listed (see below: Knott, 1911, 351-365). This remains the most authoritative guide to the primary material of one of the nineteenth century's most colourful scientists, though the biography which precedes it is uncompromisingly Whiggish. The *Royal Society Catalogue of Papers* is another useful source. Although Tait's correspondence has not been gathered together, the letters and postcards received from his lifelong friend, James Clerk Maxwell, held in the Maxwell Collection in Cambridge University Library, are published in Harman (1990, 1995), with footnotes carrying many of Tait's tidings. Other sources include Knott (1911), the Stokes Collection, also in Cambridge University Library, and the Kelvin Collection at the University of Glasgow.

In contrast to his illustrious compatriots, Maxwell and William Thomson (Lord Kelvin), the life and scientific work of Tait has been the subject of relatively little research. He was certainly a man who courted controversy, differing publicly with many leading scientists, including Clausius, Tyndall and Gibbs (Daub, 1970, 1975; Cardwell, 1971; Bork, 1966; Crowe, 1967). Yet, as well as being Thomson's collaborator on *A Treatise on Natural Philosophy* and the writer of a host of other university texts, Tait should be remembered for his steadfast promotion of quaternions, in pursuit of a notation for physics which was co-ordinate free (Bork, 1966; Stephenson, 1966; Crowe, 1967; Pritchard, 1998a & 1998b), his pioneering exploration of the topology of knots (Brown & Pritchard, 1993; Hoste et al, 1998) and, perhaps above all, his golf ball aerodynamics (Denley & Pritchard, 1993).

Simon Schaffer drew our attention to the sources relevant to Tait's debate with Todhunter on the subject of the Cambridge Tripos.

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