

THE WORLD AROUND US — SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY · P4–P7

Eolaithe agus Aireagóirí Uladh

Ulster Scientists & Inventors — P4–P7

Six Ulster scientists to know

1

Lord Kelvin — William Thomson (1824–1907)

Born in Belfast. One of the greatest physicists of the 19th century. Developed the absolute temperature scale — degrees Kelvin are named after him (0 K = absolute zero). Supervised the laying of the first transatlantic telegraph cable (1866).

Example: Absolute zero = $-273.15^{\circ}\text{C} = 0\text{ K}$

2

John Boyd Dunlop (1840–1921)

Born in Dreghorn, Scotland; lived and worked in Belfast as a veterinary surgeon. Reinvented the pneumatic (air-filled) tyre in 1887 for his son's bicycle. Founded the Dunlop tyre company.

Example: The pneumatic tyre made modern cycling, motoring, and aviation possible

3

Harry Ferguson (1884–1960)

Born in Growell, Co. Down. Invented the modern farm tractor with a three-point linkage system (the Ferguson System) — transformed agriculture worldwide. Also the first person to build and fly his own aeroplane in Ireland (1909).

4

Jocelyn Bell Burnell (b.1943)

Born in Belfast. As a PhD student at Cambridge, she discovered pulsars (rotating neutron stars) in 1967 — one of the most significant astronomical discoveries of the 20th century. Her supervisor won the Nobel Prize for the discovery; she did not.

5

Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753)

Born in Killyleagh, Co. Down. Physician and collector whose donated collection became the founding collection of the British Museum (1753) and the Natural History Museum.



6

Ernest T. S. Walton (1903–1995)

Born in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford — grew up in NI; educated at Methodist College Belfast.
Won Nobel Prize in Physics 1951 for splitting the atom. Ireland's only Nobel Physics laureate.

