Peter Guthrie Tait Encyclopedia Article

Peter Guthrie Tait

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Contents

Peter Guthrie Tait Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Peter Guthrie Tait.....3

Peter Guthrie Tait

1831-1901

Scottish mathematician and natural philosopher who worked with William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin) on the theory of knots. Tait published tables of the properties of knots in support of Thomson's theory that held molecules were simply vortices or knots in the ether thought to pervade space. Tait also studied thermal conductivity and thermoelectricity, and wrote a paper on calculating the trajectory of golf balls. In 1860 he was awarded a position at Edinburgh, beating out James Clerk Maxwell, another candidate for the chair.