

# Queen's launches major celebration of the life and legacy of John Stewart Bell

November 4 2014

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Queen's University is today leading the celebrations of a landmark in modern science, made 50 years ago by John Stewart Bell, a Queen's University graduate and Nobel Prize for Physics nominee.

Commemorative events to mark the anniversary of 'Bell's Theorem' include the floodlighting of Belfast City Hall, a groundbreaking exhibition at the Naughton Gallery at Queen's and the naming of a Belfast building after Bell. There will also be a series of free, public lectures at Queen's.

Bell's Theorem, more formally known as 'On the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox', was first published on November 4, 1964 and resolved a decades-old dispute involving Albert Einstein. It ultimately demonstrated that Einstein's views on quantum mechanics were incorrect. The Theorem also laid the foundation for a fast-developing area of modern physics – quantum information technology – which is having a revolutionary impact on computing and cryptography with particular application in the financial-services and cyber-security industries.

Bell was born into a working-class family in Tates Avenue, Belfast in 1928 and, after failing to secure a scholarship to grammar school, left education at 16 to work as a lab technician at Queen's. It was there that his talent was noticed and he was encouraged to resume his studies. He was nominated for and widely believed to be a front-runner for the Nobel Prize before his sudden death in 1990. Dubbed one of the top ten physicists of the 20th century by the Institute of Physics, Bell is

considered by some scientists to rank alongside Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein.

Professor Tom Millar, Dean of Engineering and Physical Sciences at Queen's said: "Bell's story goes to the heart of the Queen's experience – it's the story of how world-class education continues to advance knowledge, change lives and impact the world around us. It is great to see the Northern Ireland scientists of today, whose work is inspired by John Bell, leading the UK's national academic centre for internet security at Queen's Centre for Secure Information Technologies situated in the Northern Ireland Science Park."

Scientists from Queen's have joined forces with the Royal Irish Academy, the Northern Ireland Science Park, W5, the Institute of Physics, Belfast City Council, Titanic Quarter and Belfast Metropolitan College to call for November 4 to be known as 'John Bell Day' each year. They have also secured the go-ahead to name the building on Belfast's College Square East that once housed Belfast Metropolitan College – where Bell attended as a teenager – the 'John S Bell Building'. This is in parallel with an ongoing campaign to have the street that runs around the new campus of Belfast Met, in Titanic Quarter, named 'Bell's Theorem Crescent'.

Professor Mary Daly, President of the Royal Irish Academy, said: "The Royal Irish Academy wants John Bell to be the best-known scientist in Northern Ireland and to be acknowledged as one of the most important scientists in the world."

A ground-breaking exhibition, *Action at a Distance: The Life and Legacy of John Stewart Bell* previews at the Naughton Gallery in Queen's University Belfast today before opening to the public tomorrow. It includes photographs, objects and papers relating to Bell's work alongside videos exploring his science and legacy.

The exhibition also includes artistic responses to Bell's Theorem including one of the most significant, contemporary artworks from Australia – Bell's Theorem – on show in Europe for the first time. Curator Shan McAnena said: "This exhibition combines both Bell the man and Bell the scientist. Although he was a physicist dealing in highly complex theories of quantum mechanics, Bell was also a philosopher, and we have tried to reflect some of that duality in this show."

Belfast City Hall will be lit in rainbow colours from midnight-dawn this morning and dusk-midnight this evening while Bell's image will be projected onto the big screen in City Hall grounds. A series of public lectures at Queen's and a schools programme at W5 will complement these civic commemorations.

**More information:** Further details on the Naughton Gallery exhibition, which runs until November 30, and the lecture series can be found at [www.naughtongallery.org](http://www.naughtongallery.org)

Provided by Queen's University Belfast

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