The Genius o’ Glenlair
(A wee bit doggerel tae celebrate the Year o’ Maxwell 2006)

When James Clerk Maxwell was a lad,
His questing mind fair deaved his Dad;
For “What’s the go of it?” he’d speir,
An’ hammer on till a’ was clear.

They ca’d him ‘dafty’ at the scule,
An’ that, ye’d think, was awfie cruel!
He didna’ mind, he was apart
Constructing ovals o’ Descartes!

He played wi’ colours blue an’ green
An’ red, enhanced by dubious sheen;
An’ took the earliest colour photo,
As good as ony Blake or Giotto.

He analysed the rings o’ Saturn,
Resolving their striated pattern,
Predicting weel their composition
By calculus and long division.

Redundant in the Granite City
An’ spurned by En’bro’, mairs the pity,
He ended up awa’ doon South,
Nae doot they thocht him gae uncouth!

He liked tae doodle lines o’ force,
Wi’ charge an’ current as the source;
As much at hame wi’ rho an’ phi,
E, H an’ B an’ J forbye!

Through these he saw the radiant licht,
An’ workit at it day an’ nicht;
His mind roamed far whaur ithers durn’t,
An’ hit upon displacement current.

Syne back tae Galloway he repaired,
He had tae go – he was the laird!
By day conferring wi’ the ghillie,
By nicht researching willy-nilly!

At last frae Cambridge cam’ the call,
Doon tae thon hallowed Senate Hall,
Where, tho’ he held the dons in thrall,
They didna follow him at all!

Blithe son o’ Gallovidian hills
O’ birk-clad slopes an’ tumbling rills,
Wha rose through intellect sublime,
Tae comprehend baith space an’ time;

Great Scot! wha’s words in prose an’ rhyme,
Inspire us yet o’er vales o’ time,
In this thine eponymial year
Thy soaring spirit we revere!

Professor Keith Moffatt, FRS 16 Dec. 2006