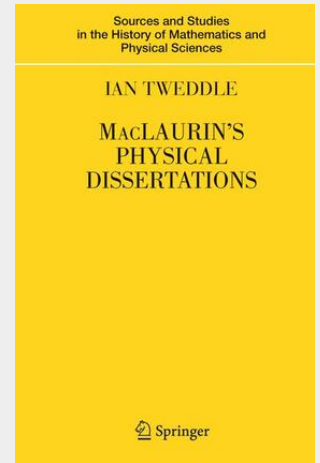


MacLaurin's Physical Dissertations

This book presents important works by the Scottish mathematician Colin MacLaurin (1698-1746), translated in English for the first time. It includes three of the mathematician's less known and often hard to obtain works. A general introduction puts the works in context and gives an outline of MacLaurin's career. Each translation is also accompanied by an introduction and analyzed both in modern terms and from a historical point of view.

Scotland had three important mathematicians who flourished during the first half of the eighteenth century and whose names are still revered in the mathematical world today. They are of course Robert Simson (1687–1768), James Stirling (1692–1770) and Colin MacLaurin (1698–1746). I have already been privileged to write about certain works of Simson and Stirling in earlier volumes in this Springer series (see [108,109]). Now I am delighted to be able to complete a trilogy with this account of MacLaurin's MA dissertation and two essays for which he was awarded prizes by the Royal Academy of Sciences, Paris; these items are concerned principally with gravitation, collisions and the tides. As on previous occasions I am indebted to many people and institutions for assistance, advice and encouragement. I would like to record my thanks to the following in particular: my colleagues, Dr. Brian Dufty and Professor Ian Murdoch, whose early versions of parts of this work and provided guidance and information on some ideas from physics; my colleague, Dr.



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