

Paul Adrien Maurice Dirac

(8 August 1902 – 20 October 1984)

English theoretical physicist

made fundamental contributions to the development of quantum mechanics; he formulated the Dirac equation and predicted the existence of antimatter.

...unusual in character.

He was the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge,



Delta Function

An infinitely tall, unit impulse delta function explicitly appears in an 1827 text of Cauchy. It began to be used by electrical engineers (like Oliver Heaviside who used Fourier series to manipulate the unit impulse).

Dirac's undergraduate degree was in electrical engineering.

The Dirac delta function as such was introduced as a "convenient notation" in his influential 1930 book *The Principles of Quantum Mechanics*.

The computations made by the theoretical physicists appeared to mathematicians as nonsense until the introduction of *distributions* by Laurent Schwartz to formalize and validate the computations.

