Irish physicist Ernest (E.T.S.) Walton, who shared the 1951 Physics Nobel Prize with John Cockcroft for their 1932 experiment which 'split the atom', died on 15 June. After initial studies at Trinity College, Dublin, he went to the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, in 1926, where Rutherford was calling for higher energy particles to induce nuclear reactions. A gifted craftsman, Walton initially looked at the possibility of accelerating protons in an induction machine, a precursor of the betatron. With Cockcroft, he then built the famous pioneer high voltage (700,000 volt) accelerator which enabled protons to tunnel into light nuclei and in 1932 produce the first synthetic nuclear transformations - the first accelerator and the first accelerator experiment.

He returned to Trinity College in 1934 and became Professor in 1946. In his 1951 Nobel lecture, he said 'It is difficult to see how particles of energy greater than 10,000 MeV (10 GeV) can be produced economically by existing methods. Further progress may have to await the introduction of new ideas'. With the figure suitably re-dimensioned, this quote has subsequently been re-used on many occasions.