

Roger Bacon (c. 1214 – 1292)

English philosopher and often regarded as first carried out research into optics and invented the magnifying glass.

Born at Ilchester, Somerset, England.
Little is known of Bacon's early life.
He appears to have come from a wealthy family.

Bacon's scientific works contain lengthy philosophical digressions. He is the disciple of Aristotle.



About 1247 he joined the Franciscan Order, and three years later he returned to Oxford, but it appears that his quarrelsome nature and independence of thought led him into conflict with his colleagues. From 1257 onward he pursued his studies in isolation—traditionally at a house on Folly Bridge that stood until 1799—taking no part in University affairs.

He had remarkable powers of imagination and many of his prophecies have been fulfilled. They include mechanical transport on land and sea, aerial flight and submarine exploration.

Some time between 1277 and 1279 Bacon was condemned to prison by his fellow Franciscans because of certain suspected novelties in his teaching. How long he was imprisoned, it is not possible to determine. His last work, incomplete as so many others, was written in 1292 and shows him as aggressive as ever. He was suspected by many of being involved in magic. He may have been imprisoned by the church authorities, who disapproved his writings.

He died on 11th June 1292 and was buried in Oxford.