

May Historical Events in Chemistry

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May 1, 1493

Paracelsus, or Theophrastus Bombast von Hohenheim, who founded a new school of chemistry, iatrochemistry, which is the application of chemistry to medicine; was born on this date. He believed that the four elements (air, water, earth, & fire) were present in substances as three principles, mercury (volatility and fusibility), sulfur (inflammability), and salt (incombustibility), and he developed a cure for St. Vitus Disease.

May 2, 1912

One hundred years ago on this date, BF Goodrich Company was incorporated.

May 3, 1892

George Paget Thomson was born on this date. In 1937 he shared the Nobel Prize in Physics with C.J. Davisson for their discovery of the interference phenomena arising when crystals are exposed to electron beams.

May 6, 1871

F. Victor Grignard was born on this date. One hundred years ago, he shared the 1912 Nobel Prize in Chemistry with Paul Sabatier for his discovery of the so-called Grignard reagent and for Sabatier's methods of hydrogenating organic compounds in the presence of finely divided metals, whereby the progress of organic chemistry has been greatly advanced.

May 7, 1939

Sidney Altman was born on this date. He shared the Nobel Prize with Thomas R. Cech in 1989 for their discovery of the catalytic properties of RNA.

May 8, 1873

Nevil V. Sidgwick, who was born on this date, was a researcher on molecular structure and the theory of valency. He did research on bonding in coordination compounds and investigated phase equilibria and the solubility of organic acids and bases.

May 11, 1904

Donald F. Othmer, born on this date, was a chemical engineer who developed the Othmer still and was co-founder & editor of the Kirk-Othmer Encyclopedia of Chemical Technology.

May 16, 1950

J. Georg Bednorz, born on this date, shared the 1987 Nobel Prize in Physics with K. Alexander Müller for their important breakthrough in the discovery of superconductivity in ceramic materials.

May 18, 1778 Andrew Ure, first to describe chemical solutions in terms of chemical equivalents, i.e., normality, was born on this date.

May 19, 1914

Born this date, Max F. Perutz shared the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1962 with John C. Kendrew for studies of the structure of globular proteins. He studied the structure of hemoproteins using X-ray diffraction.

May 20, 1890

Francis O. Rice, a researcher in free radicals, was born on this date. He served as Head of the Chemistry Department at The Catholic University of America from 1938 to 1959.

May 22, 1912

Herbert C. Brown was born on this date. He was a researcher in organoboron and carbocation chemistry and shared the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1979 with Georg Wittig for their development of the use of boron- and phosphorus-containing compounds, respectively, into important reagents in organic synthesis.

May 24, 1640

John Mayow, who was born on this date, discovered that air contained two gases, one of which supported life & combustion, *spiritus nitro-aerous* (oxygen). He recognized the role of oxygen in the combustion of metals and recorded a correct anatomical description of respiration.

May 28, 1887

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, Kasimir Fajans was born on this date. He established the radioactive displacement law and initiated the concept of heat of hydration of gaseous ions.

May 29, 1794

Antoine A. B. Bussy, who isolated magnesium in 1828, was born on this date.

May 30, 1912

Julius Axelrod was born on this date. He was a researcher on catecholamines. He shared the Nobel Prize in Medicine or Physiology in 1970 with B. Katz and U. Von Euler for discoveries concerning humoral transmitters in the nerve terminals and the mechanism for their storage, release and inactivation.

Additional historical events can be found at Dr. May's website,
<http://faculty.cua.edu/may/Chemistrycalendar.htm>