

Prof. Peter Day - Obituary

1. European Institute of Molecular magnetism : <http://www.eimm.eu/news.php>

Professor Peter Day passed away on May 19, 2020



Cyanotype by Françoise Villain

The European Institute of Molecular Magnetism is sad to announce that Professor Peter Day passed away on May 19, 2020.

Prof. Peter Day was a distinguished Chemist, Emeritus Professor at University College London and Emeritus Fullerian Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Institution, London.

Born in a family of modest origin in a small village Kent, Peter Day was educated in a grammar school in Maidstone. He got a PhD degree at Wadham College, Oxford under the supervision of Prof. Robert Williams, a famous bioinorganic chemist. He was a pioneer in materials chemistry, interested in the physical properties of new inorganic and molecular compounds and in the best way to model and to explain them theoretically. His work with Robin on mixed valence systems, known as the “Robin and Day classification”, starting with Prussian blue “the grand-daddy of all mixed valence compounds”, is a remarkable scientific piece, still fully operative among modern researchers. [1] Peter was known to design elegant sophisticated experiments and the theoretical models useful to interpret them: optics, spectroscopy, magnetism, (super)conductivity.

Prof. Day was appointed at different positions at the Inorganic Chemistry Laboratory at Oxford University and at Saint-John’s college. (1963-1988). He moved to Grenoble to become Director of the European high flux neutron source (Institute Laue-Langevin, 1988-1991) and of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (1991-1998), a venerable British Institution, since Davy and Faraday, dedicated to spreading science for citizen awareness. [2,3] The « Friday Evening Lectures » are still Londoner celebrated events. Prof. Peter Day was at the same time head of the Davy Faraday Research Laboratory. He then became Emeritus Professor at University College London. During 40 years of active research, Prof. P. Day published many outstanding results in around 700 articles, in collaboration with numerous groups in UK, the US, Europe, India, Japan. (see annex) He published a book gathering his most important works.[4]

Peter Day was elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1986 and member of the Academia Europaea in 1992. He has received awards from the Royal Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). The RSC award in materials chemistry bears his name.[5] Prof P. Day has served many National, European and International agencies and institutions, both professional and governmental. Prof P. Day holds numerous honorary degrees and fellowships from different universities and academies of sciences in the world. [6-8]

He presented many scientific lectures worldwide. In an elegant, pleasant and inimitable style he shared his views about science, scientists and laboratories and about his own scientist’s story in several books. [2,3] [9,10]

In the molecular magnetism community, Prof. Peter Day occupied a special place, engaged in many European projects and contracts. He often welcomed in the Royal Society of Chemistry in London or in Saint John’s

College in Oxford conferences, workshops and discussions. His long experience of Laboratories and European academic and funding Institutions were precious to tackle cleverly and to solve wisely efficiently scientific and organisational problems.

We will miss him.

- [1] Robin, Melvin B. and Day, Peter, "Mixed Valence Chemistry", Advances in Inorganic Chemistry and Radiochemistry, 1967, volume 10, pages 247–422.
- [2] P. Day, Nature not mocked, Places, People and Science, Imperial College Press, Singapore, 2005.
- [3] P. Day, The philosopher's Tree, Michael Faraday(s life and work in his own words, Institute of Physics Publishing, London, 1999.
- [4] P. Day, Molecules into materials: case studies in materials chemistry, mixed valency, magnetism and superconductivity, World Scientific Publishing, Singapore, 2007.
- [5] <https://www.rsc.org/ScienceAndTechnology/Awards/PeterDayAward/>
- [6] <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/chemistry/people/peter-day>
- [7] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Day_\(chemist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Day_(chemist))
- [8] <https://www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/discover/news/professor-peter-day-frs-frsc-finstp/>
- [9] P. Day, On the cucumber tree, The Grimsay Press, Edinburgh 2012
- [10] P. Day, Scientific Tourism, Some places on the way, Independently published, 2019

[Annex : List of publications](#)

2. Web site of the German molecular magnetism community, <http://www.molmag.de/>

Peter Day



Prof. Peter Day at a NOSIC meeting, Prullans, Spain, 2006.
Picture by Prof. Santiago Alvarez.

Professor Peter Day FRS was a pioneer in materials chemistry, interested in the physical properties of new inorganic and molecular compounds and in the best way to model and to explain them theoretically. His work with Robin on mixed valence systems, known as the "Robin and Day classification", starting with Prussian blue "the grand-daddy of all mixed valence compounds", is a remarkable scientific piece, still fully operative among modern researchers. Peter was known to design elegant sophisticated experiments and the theoretical models useful to interpret them: optics, spectroscopy, magnetism, (super)conductivity. During 40 years of active research, Peter published around 700 articles, in collaboration with numerous groups in UK, the US, Europe, India, Japan. Peter was elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1986 and member of the Academia Europaea in 1992. He has received awards from the Royal Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). The RSC award in materials chemistry bears his name. Peter served many National, European and International agencies and institutions. Peter passed away on 19th May 2020. He will be sadly missed.

3. The French MM website : <http://www.gdr-mcm2.cnrs.fr/>

C'est avec une grande tristesse que nous avons appris le décès de Peter Day le 19 mai. Une note brève est accessible en cliquant sur sa photo ci-dessous (Merci à Michel Verdaguer pour la rédaction).

Le professeur Peter Day fut un pionnier en chimie des matériaux, intéressé par les propriétés physiques de nouveaux composés inorganiques et moléculaires et par le meilleur moyen de les modéliser et de les expliquer théoriquement. Son travail avec Robin sur les composés à valence mixte, connu comme la « classification de Robin et Day », démarrée avec le bleu de Prusse, le « grand-daddy » des composés à valence mixte, est un ensemble remarquable, toujours d'actualité parmi les chercheurs contemporains. Peter était connu pour sa conception élégante d'expériences sophistiquées et des modèles théoriques pour les interpréter : optique, spectroscopie, magnétisme, (supra-)conductivité. Au cours de 40 années de recherche active, Peter a publié près de 700 articles, en collaboration avec de nombreux groupes au Royaume Uni, aux Etats-Unis, en Europe, en Inde et au Japon. Il a formé de nombreux jeunes scientifiques. Il a écrit plusieurs ouvrages décrivant avec humour son vécu de scientifique dans la société. Il appréciait particulièrement la vie en France où il avait établi une résidence méridionale.

Peter Day était « Fellow of the Royal Society » depuis 1986 et membre de l'Academia Europaea depuis 1992. Il a reçu des prix de la Royal Society et de la Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). Le prix de la RSC en chimie des matériaux porte son nom.

Peter était engagé dans de nombreuses agences et institutions Britanniques, Européennes et Internationales. Il a en particulier été directeur de l'institut Laue Langevin, la source Européenne de neutrons à Grenoble. Il a dirigé la « Royal institution of Great Britain », à Londres, connue depuis Davy et Faraday pour diffuser la science avec ses célèbres « Friday Evening Discourses ». Peter est décédé le 19 mai. Il nous manquera.



Peter Day, en hiver 2003 à Paris, débouchant une bouteille de champagne d'Aÿ à l'issue d'une réunion de préparation du réseau Européen Magmanet. Photographie MV.