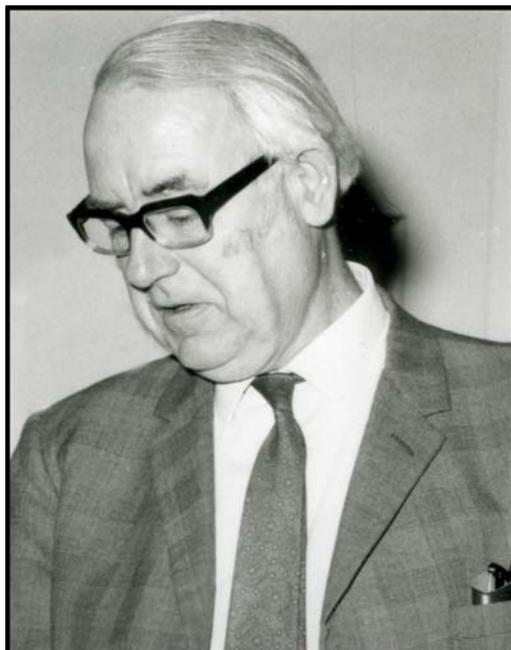


Trevor Iltyd Williams (1921–1996)



Trevor Iltyd Williams was born on July 16, 1921, at Bristol, England. He was educated at Bristol's Clifton College and after at Queens College, Oxford, where he received his chemistry degree under Wilson Baker. He was Nuffield Research Scholar during 1942–1945, working with Howard Florey and Ernst Chain on penicillin and other antibiotics. During his research, Williams employed absorption chromatography to purify helvolic acid. He received his doctorate in 1945, in which year he became involved with the Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) journal *Endeavour*.

Williams's first book, *An Introduction to Chromatography*, was published in 1946, followed one year later by *Drugs from Plants*, and a publication on the history of chemical industry, *Fifty Years of Progress: The Story of the Castner-Kellner Alkali Company, 1895–1945* (1947). In the latter case, as with many industry-sponsored publications, he was not acknowledged as author. In 1953 he published *The Chemical Industry, Past and Present*, that later was republished as a set book for the U.K. Open University courses. His second book on chromatography, *The Elements of Chromatography*, was published in 1956.

In 1955, he succeeded his former teacher and historian of chemistry, Erik J. Holmyard, as editor of *Endeavour*, a post he held until 1996, retiring only after the subsequent owner, Pergamon, was taken over by Elsevier. Williams was managing editor of the five-volume *History of Technology*, sponsored by ICI and published by Oxford University Press (1954–1958); it was later supplemented with two volumes covering the twentieth century (1978). The original five-volumes were condensed to a single volume, co-authored with Thomas K. Derry, and entitled *A Short History of Technology from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1900* (1960), followed by *A Short History of Twentieth Century Technology c. 1900–c. 1950* (1982).

From 1962, Williams was academic relations adviser for ICI. Through this post he became involved in the distribution of postdoctoral fellowships and research grants, and negotiations between universities, government and industry. Subsequently, he served on committees of the Royal Society and the Ministry of Overseas Development. The employment at ICI ended in 1974 with a reduction in funding for academic research.

Among other historical works, he updated Alexander Findlay's *A Hundred Years of Chemistry* (1965). However, his most significant contribution was undoubtedly the *Biographical Dictionary of Scientists*, of which four editions appeared between 1968 and 1994. Included among the biographies that he authored are *Florey, Penicillin and After* (1984), and *Robert Robinson, Chemist Extraordinary* (1990). His *A History of the British Gas Industry* (1981) is the only comprehensive work on the subject. His last book, *Our Scientific Heritage—An A to Z of Great Britain and Ireland—Science* (1996) was a survey of scientific sites and appeared shortly before his death.

Williams acted as chair of the predecessor of the Society for the History of Chemistry and Alchemy, the Society for the Study of Alchemy and Early Chemistry (1967–1974), as joint editor of *Annals of Science* (1966–1974), and as a member of the advisory council of the Science Museum (1972–1984). Williams received the Dexter Award in 1976 for his extensive publications relating to the history of chemistry. He died on October 12, 1996.

Sources

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