

Peter John Turnbull Morris (1956—



Born on 2 February 1956 of an English father and a Scottish mother, and brought up in Upminster, Essex, Peter J. T. Morris received his B.A. (First Class) in chemistry from Oxford University in 1978 where he wrote a dissertation on "The Education of British Chemists in the Eighteenth Century" during his postgraduate year (Part Two). This was followed by a D. Phil. from the Faculty of Modern History at Oxford in 1983 for a dissertation on "The Development of Acetylene Chemistry and Synthetic Rubber by I.G. Farbenindustrie AG, 1926-1945."

From 1982 to 1984 Morris was a research fellow in the history of chemistry group at the Open University, Milton Keynes, followed by two and a half years as assistant director for special projects at the Center for the History of Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania. Morris returned to the Open University in 1987 as the first Royal Society/British Academy Research Fellow in the History of Science. In 1991 he joined the staff of the Science Museum in London as the Senior Curator in Experimental Chemistry (later Experimental and Industrial Chemistry). In this position he built up the museum's collection of modern chemical instrumentation. Since 2004, he has been the Manager of Research in the Collections Unit of the Science Museum, managing a research program and supervising the work of the Science Group.

Morris initially concentrated his research on the history of the German chemical industry, notably the development of acetylene chemistry, synthetic rubber and Reppe chemistry and he has published several papers in this field. For three years in the early 1980s, he traveled across Britain listing the pre-1914 records of the chemical industry, an endeavor which was published with Colin Russell as *Archives of the British Chemical Industry 1750-1914* (1988). While he was at the Center for the History of Chemistry, his work on the history of the American synthetic rubber industry and the development of polymer chemistry resulted in two publications, *Polymer Pioneers* (1986) and *The American Synthetic Research Program* (1989). He was the editor of *Milestones in 150 Years of the Chemical Industry* (with H. L. Roberts and W. A. Campbell, 1991), *The Development of Plastics* (with Susan Mossman, 1994), *Determinants of the Evolution of the European Chemical Industry, 1900-1939* (with A. S. Travis, H.G. Schröter and E. Homburg, 1998), and *From Classical to Modern Chemistry: The Instrumental Revolution* (2002).

Throughout his career, Morris has been interested in the history of modern organic chemistry, and with Theodor Benfey, published *Robert Burns Woodward: Architect and Artist in the World of Molecules* (2001), an edited and annotated anthology of scientific papers and a previously unpublished lecture by the Scottish-American Nobel Laureate. He has also contributed several entries to biographical dictionaries, notably the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* and the *New Dictionary of Scientific Biography*. He has published more than 35 papers in the history of chemistry in various journals and 20 contributions to books in the discipline. When the American Chemical Society began its National Historic Chemical Landmarks program in 1992, Morris was appointed a member of the first advisory committee and served on the committee through 2001.

Morris was probably the first historian of chemistry to cite internet sources in a paper, and he has adopted new technologies to promote the history of science. He was involved in the production of CDs on both the history of materials and Edinburgh during the Scottish Enlightenment, and

he led the content development for "Ingenious, the Science Museum's website on science and culture (<http://www.ingenious.org.uk/>).

Morris was editor of the Royal Society of Chemistry Historical Group Newsletter between 1996 and 2001, when he became editor of *Ambix*, the journal of the Society for the History of Chemistry. As editor of *Ambix*, he has overseen a revision of the format, introduction of special issues on a regular basis, an increase of fifty percent in the content and the launch of the online edition.

The Edelstein Award in the History of Chemistry was awarded to Peter J. T. Morris for the breadth and quality of his research publications in the history of chemistry and his significant contributions as editor of *Ambix*.

Sources

Nomination documents for the 2006 Edelstein Award, American Chemical Society Division of the History of Chemistry Archives, Chemical Heritage Foundation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Peter J. T. Morris, private communication.

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