

Conference Report

Basel Chemistry Symposium 2014

In Memory of Prof. T. Reichstein

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After the first ever Basel Chemistry Symposium (BCS) held in 2013, the 2nd annual BCS took place on the 23rd of May, 2014. The Symposium was dedicated to Prof. Dr. Tadeus Reichstein, who made significant contributions to the Chemistry Department of the University of Basel, not only of scientific nature, but also in the development of the Department itself.



Tadeus Reichstein, 1950 Nobel Laureate in Medicine for his “discoveries relating to the hormones of the adrenal cortex, their structure and biological effects.”

Prof. Dr. Tadeus Reichstein (1897–1996)

Tadeus Reichstein was born in Wloclawek (former Russian-Polish territory). He moved with his family to Zürich in 1906 and started his studies in chemistry at the ETH Zürich. He graduated in 1922 under the supervision of Hermann Staudinger (Nobel Laureate, 1953) and later conducted his habilitation under the supervision of Leopold Ruzicka (Nobel Laureate, 1939). After an offer from the University of Basel, he continued his research on the synthesis of furanes and pyrroles. Besides chemistry, he was critically involved in the development of the new chemistry

department building. Scientifically, his main achievements were the first synthesis of vitamin C and the isolation of corticosteroids from the adrenal cortex. In 1950, Prof. Reichstein, E. C. Kendall and P. S. Hench were awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine “for their discoveries relating to the hormones of the adrenal cortex, their structure and biological effects”. After his retirement he shifted his research interests more and more towards botany, becoming a worldwide-recognized expert on the cytotaxonomy of ferns.

The PhD Chemistry Community (PCC)

The PCC is the forum for graduate students and researchers in the Department of Chemistry, University of Basel. The PCC aims to enhance collaboration and promote community spirit, both by arranging events and seminars across the department, and by promoting scientific exchange and collaboration between research groups.



The organizing committee (from left, Andrea Pannwitz, Daniel Bachmann, Charlotte Laupheimer, Isabel Kerschgens, Christophe Daeppen, Lukas Jundt, Michel Rickhaus, Markus Gantenbein, Ina Bodoky; not pictured: Martin Rother).

The Basel Chemistry Symposium

The symposium was opened by Prof. *Andreas Pfaltz* with a short introduction on the impact of Prof. Reichstein on the development of the Chemistry Department and the pharma industry in Basel, including some personal reminiscences from the time when Prof. Reichstein was still active in the department as Emeritus.



Key lectures given by Dr. Michael Kessler, Dr. Thomas Brunner and Dr. Werner Bonrath; Nobel Prize Medal.

Dr. **Michael Kessler**, Pharmacy Museum Basel, continued with a laudation covering Reichstein's childhood, academic career and his further achievements. The lecture was concluded with a fun highlight: The audience had the unique possibility to view and hold the original Nobel Prize gold medal of Prof. Reichstein.

Closer insight into the variety and history of vitamins and their syntheses in large-scale production was given by Dr. **Werner Bonrath** (DSM Nutritional Products). Starting with the first discoveries of vitamins and their relevance for human health, he reviewed the first attempts at scaling up the synthetic procedures. He concluded with a detailed overview of the comprehensive toolbox in today's industrial processes.

After a short coffee break and poster session, the symposium was continued with three Postdoctoral speakers presenting their current research in the Department: Dr. **Sébastien Coyné** (F. P. Seebeck) and Dr. **Niamh Murray** (E. Constable and C. Housecroft group) and Dr. **Anja Car** (W. Meier group).



Postdoctoral speakers: (from left) Dr. Sébastien Coyné, Dr. Anja Car and Dr. Niamh Murray.

Prof. Dr. **Thomas Brunner** (University of Konstanz) delivered detailed insight into the immune system by focusing on local glucocorticoid synthesis in mucosal tissues, which provided a better understanding of inflammatory processes from a biochemical and pharmacological perspective.

Finally, the winners of the poster session awards were announced. The winners were: **Daniel Bachmann** (D. Gillingham group, OC), **Cathrin Ertl** (E. Constable and C. Housecroft group, AC) and **Natalja Strelnikova** (T. Pfohl group, PC).



Poster session award winners: (from left) Daniel Bachmann, Cathrin Ertl and Natalja Strelnikova.

Following the symposium, the annual department BBQ was held in the courtyard of the Chemistry Department. The good weather allowed us to celebrate and enjoy the good time in a convivial atmosphere. The organizing committee would like to thank the Chemistry Department of the University of Basel for financial support and all volunteers and speakers for their contributions.

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