

ISHRAD, International Day of Radiology and the 120th anniversary of Rontgen's discovery in Wurzburg.

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November 8 1895 was the day when Rontgen a relatively unknown Physics Professor at Wurzburg ,Germany conducted his epoch making experiment in his laboratory late on a Friday evening . The rest of the story has now become etched in medical history. Today it is difficult to imagine modern hospitals without radiology departments. None of this would have been possible without his discovery of X-rays , published in his elegant paper 'Eine Neue art von Strahlen' and presented to the Physical and Medical Society of Wurzburg on 23 January 1896. News of the discovery spread worldwide and Rontgen went on to become the first recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1901.

On Nov 8 2015 a celebratory event to mark the 120th anniversary of the discovery was held in the lecture hall of the Institute of Anatomy Wurzburg. It is here that the distinguished Professor of Anatomy , Albert Von Kolliker worked and discovered mitochondria and subsequently became a Fellow of the Royal Society of London and Copley Medallist. It was his hand that was X-rayed by Rontgen in the famous demonstration in the lecture theatre all those years ago. Readers are probably more familiar with the famous 1966 painting by the artist Robert Thom (1915-1979) depicting this epoch making event.

The weekend of celebratory events in Wurzburg included a scientific meeting of the International Society of the History of Radiology celebrating Rontgen's discovery held in the Rontgen memorial building on the Rontgenring road. This building luckily escaped the Allied bombing of Wurzburg which destroyed 90% of the city in 1945. This building consists of Rontgen's original laboratories and an exhibition space and is now part of the new University of applied sciences, Wurzburg and displays material relating to Rontgen's life and provides an insight into the turn of the twentieth century physics. The tour of the famous laboratories was one of the highlights of the weekend. It was in this very room that X-rays were discovered by Rontgen and some of the apparatus was on display as well as Rontgen's bookcase and desk and the famous sculpture of his hands.

A range of lectures were presented on a variety of topics including the development of radiology in Wurzburg, Rontgen's birthplace in Remscheid and an interesting presentation by S Popp on the Rontgen memorial site itself. The memorial site consists of the laboratories Rontgen used at the University of Wurzburg and is now under the care of the newer University of Applied Sciences Wurzburg Scheinfurt. The road on which this building stands was renamed the Rontgenring in 1909 in Rontgen's honour. In the afternoon a variety of talks were presented on topics ranging from Hounsfield, the Braggs, early uro-radiology to shoe fluoroscopy. The meeting was organised by the International Society for the History of Radiology, Roentgen Memorial site and the German Roentgen Society.

Wurzburg is also home to the famous Juliushospital founded in 1576 and an accompanying winery the profits which have enabled the hospital to flourish throughout the years. In the early nineteenth century this hospital had one of the world's most advanced operating theatres.

Wurzburg University is one of Germany's oldest universities and boasts 14 Nobel Laureates including Rontgen and Fischer, Nernst and Max von Laue the discoverer of x-ray diffraction in 1912. Landsteiner who in 1900 did his pioneering work on blood groups also worked here. In addition Rudolf Virchow the great pathologist was also associated with Wurzburg for part of his career.

The city honoured its famous son with a front page article in the local paper and celebrations were held on the evening of Nov 8 to which delegates and local dignitaries were invited.

The weekend was a truly humbling, informative and inspiring experience for the members of the British Society for the History of Radiology who were lucky enough to attend.

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