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Jonathan Pritchard @jr_pritchard

Little reception in @ImperialPhysics tonight to celebrate all those that have won prizes over last year. Amazing breadth inc Paul Brown MBE



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Prof of Inorganic Chem at Imperial 1956-96

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A History of the Physics Department

The Story of Physics in South Kensington

Past Heads of Department

Nobel Prize Winners



Patrick Blackett was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1948 for "his development of the Wilson cloud-chamber and his discoveries therewith in the fields of nuclear physics and cosmic radiation".

Blackett started his research career in the '20s with Rutherford. Following Rutherford's initial observations of the ejection of protons from collision experiments, Blackett used the Wilson cloud-chamber to observe 400,000 tracks of alpha-particles in nitrogen gas, so being the first to identify and report the transmutation of nitrogen to oxygen. With the Occhialini he then used the chamber to detect cosmic rays. initially the chamber was simply expanded every few seconds with the result that most photographs were blank; Blackett realised that by putting Geiger counters above and below the chamber to control its operation, photographs could be taken only when cosmic rays had left tracks in the gas. In 1933 he used the technique to confirm Anderson's discovery of the positron, clearly demonstrating that positrons were produced in electron-positron pairs.

In 1953 he took over the Physics Department here, planning and leading its major expansion in the 1950s. Subsequently he became president of the Royal Society, was made a life peer and a Companion of Honour, and was honoured with the Order of Merit

