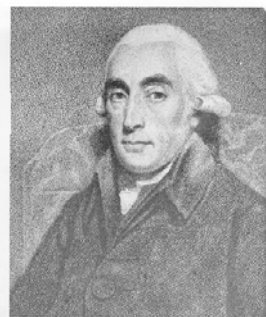


Dr Joseph Black, M.D.



Dr Joseph Black was born on 16th April 1728 in Bordeaux. He had 14 siblings! His parents both had Scottish connections; his father, John, was of Scots descent and his mother, Margaret was from Aberdeenshire.

His father was a wine merchant so they would have been well-off but not rich on account of their vast amount of children to feed and nurture.

He went to a school in Belfast to learn Greek then enrolled at Glasgow University to learn Arts. His father didn't think this was useful and eventually, after four years, managed to persuade Joseph to take medicine instead. He then went to Edinburgh to further his knowledge and then returned to Glasgow to lecture chemistry. As he was such a popular teacher, almost all of his Glasgow students followed him to Edinburgh! His lectures even attracted students from Europe and America.

Dr Joseph Black is perhaps most famous for the fact that he discovered carbon dioxide. He started his work in early 1750- 52 and began on a basic magnesium carbonate which he called "magnesia alba". He did the first gravimetric weight measurements on the changes when magnesia alba was heated and CO₂ was released. With the substance produced, he then began to test this and reacted it with alkalis and acids.

Although he died on 6th December, 1799, his legacy lives on with the fact that his notes are still used in lectures and chemistry degrees today. Scientists are still discovering more about carbon and indeed, carbon dioxide is one of the main causes of global warming.

Black is associated with many places, perhaps most in Glasgow where he made his famous lectures and discoveries.

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