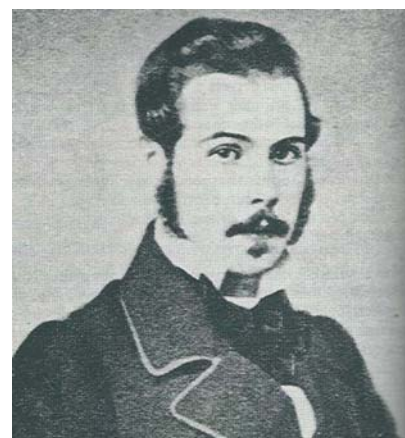


Archibald Scott Couper

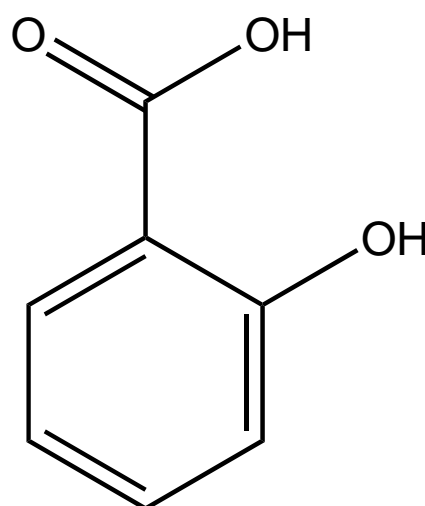
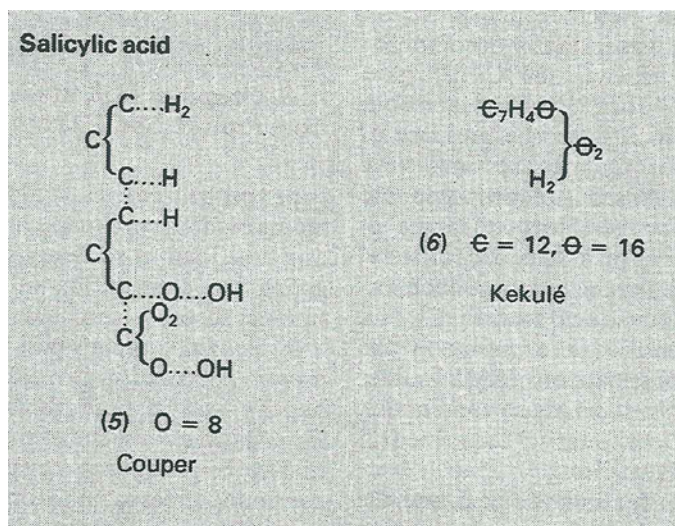
Archibald Scott Couper was born in the small village of Kirkintilloch on the 31st of March 1831 where his father was a wealthy cotton manufacturer.

Couper's early years were spent travelling between Germany in the Summer, where he attended concerts and practiced art, and Scotland where he attended Edinburgh and Glasgow universities graduating with a MA from Edinburgh. Couper first turned to chemistry in Berlin in 1865 and 18 months later started full time research in Paris.



Couper introduced the idea that carbon atoms in molecules form chains and also established the tetravalency of carbon. In addition to this Couper was the first chemist to write down a cyclic compound and would come up with the chemical structure of benzene in 1858, which had eluded and confused chemists since its discovery in 1825. Tragically a delay in publishing caused the credit for the discovery to be awarded to another chemist which would lead to Couper retiring from science and fading into obscurity.

Writing and reading the structural formulae of chemicals is as important to a chemist as riding a bike is to a cyclist. It was the visionary Couper who laid the foundation for the modern way of writing chemical structures, with solid lines indicating bonds between atoms. Without this way of representing chemicals modern organic chemistry would be impossible.



Kirkintilloch, birthplace. Map reference: NS650729