Speech for Marie Skłodowska Curie - Object of the Month

Olivia, a volunteer at the Lapworth Museum of Geology, talks about her choice of the Object of the Month.

Title: **Object of the Month - Speech for Marie Skłodowska Curie - Lapworth Museum of Geology (/facilities/lapworth-museum/about/object-marie-curie-speech.aspx)**

Duration: 2.12 mins

Speaker Names (if given): **S1** Olivia, Lapworth Museum volunteer

S1 My name is Olivia and I'm a volunteer here at the Lapworth Museum of Geology. The object of the Month I have chosen is this, which is the speech given by the principal of the university, Sir Oliver Lodge, when the University of Birmingham awarded Marie Skłodowska Curie an Honorary Doctorate in 1913.

Marie Curie was a Polish-born physicist. She and her husband Pierre discovered two elements, Polonium and radium, and were awarded a Nobel Prize in physics in 1902. Marie was the first women to ever be awarded a Nobel Prize and she won one later in 1911, this time in chemistry, making her the first person to ever win two Nobel Prizes in separate fields. Marie discovered that radiation destroyed unhealthy cells quicker than healthy ones, making her research the foundation of radiography.

At the beginning of her career she was rejected from a Polish university because she was a woman and the Nobel Prize in 1902 originally was only going to be awarded to her husband Pierre and one of their fellow male scientists. After protesting this decision Marie was also included in the award. The same prejudices that faced Marie Curie were prevalent in all areas of academia. Charles Lapworth, however, was a strong advocate for women in the sciences and campaigned to let women be allowed into the Geological Association. Even though he faced strong opposition, women were allowed to attend meetings from 1904 and from 1919 were allowed to become fellows.

As the damaging effects of radiation were not known at the time, Marie Curie completed her research without using proper protective gear. Sadly, in 1934 she died from the effects of radiation poisoning. At the end of his speech, Sir Oliver Lodge calls Marie Curie “the greatest woman of science of all time” and today she is still one of the best known women scientists. Her research into radiation has paved the way for radiology, which still saves lives today.

END OF RECORDING

© University of Birmingham 2015