

Humphry Davy Chronology (Condensed)



| Davy's age | Date | Event |
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| 0 | 17 December 1778 | Born in Penzance to Robert and Grace Davy (née Millet). |
| 10-13 | 1789 to 1792 | Attends Penzance Grammar School (under the Revd George Coryton). |
| 14 | January to December 1793 | Attends Truro Grammar School (under the Revd Cornelius Cardew); the cost is borne by a family friend, Dr John Tonkin. |
| 15 | 10 December 1794 | His father, Robert Davy, dies. |
| 16 | 10 February 1795 | Apprenticed for five years as an apothecary-surgeon to John Bingham Borlase of Penzance. |
| 19 | June 1798 | Composes 'An Essay on Heat, Light, and the Combinations of Light', which criticises French chemistry and proposes an unorthodox theory instead. Nevertheless, it results in the politically radical (Jacobin) physician Thomas Beddoes offering him the position of Superintendent of the new Medical Pneumatic Institution at Clifton, near Bristol. |
| | 1 October 1798 | Borlase releases Davy from his apprenticeship. |
| | 2 October 1798 | Davy leaves Cornwall for Bristol, arriving five days later. |
| 20 | April 1799 | Discovers physiological effects of nitrous oxide. |
| 21 | July 1800 | Publishes <i>Researches, Chemical and Philosophical; Chiefly Concerning Nitrous Oxide, or Dephlogisticated Nitrous Air, and its Respiration</i> . |

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| 22 | January 1801 | Discussions held about possibility of Davy moving to the Royal Institution in London. |
| | February 1801 | Visits London where he is appointed (16th) Assistant Lecturer (to Thomas Garnett) at the Royal Institution. |
| | 11 March 1801 | Arrives in London to take up position at the Royal Institution. |
| | 25 April 1801 | Delivers first lecture at the Royal Institution. |
| | 1 June 1801 | Appointed Lecturer at the Royal Institution. |
| 23 | 31 May 1802 | Appointed Professor of Chemistry at the Royal Institution. |
| 24 | 17 November 1803 | Elected Fellow of the Royal Society of London. |
| 26 | 30 November 1805 | Awarded Copley Medal of the Royal Society of London. |
| 27 | 20 November 1806 | First Bakerian Lecture read to the Royal Society of London. |
| 28 | 22 January 1807 | Elected junior Secretary of the Royal Society of London. |
| | 19 October 1807 | Isolates potassium, as he later names it, and shortly afterwards identifies sodium. |
| | 12 November 1807 | Second Bakerian Lecture read to the Royal Society of London. |
| 29 | June and July 1808 | Isolates magnesium, calcium, strontium, and barium. |
| | 15 December 1808 | Third Bakerian Lecture read to the Royal Society of London. |
| 30 | 16 November 1809 | Fourth Bakerian Lecture read to the Royal Society of London. |
| 31 | June and July 1810 | Demonstrates chlorine is a chemical element which he thus names. |
| | 15 November 1810 | Fifth Bakerian Lecture read to the Royal Society of London. |
| 33 | End of March 1812 | Visits Northampton to ask Jane Apreece's uncle for permission to marry her. |
| | 9 April 1812 | Knighted by the Prince Regent. |
| | 10 April 1812 | Delivers final lecture at the Royal Institution. |
| | 11 April 1812 | Marries Apreece followed by honeymoon at Beechwood; Lord Byron composes a risqué skit on their nuptials. |
| | 11 May 1812 | Steps down from his paid positions at the Royal Institution but takes on honorary roles; also resigns his positions at the Royal Society of London and the Board of Agriculture. |
| 34 | 1 March 1813 | On his recommendation, Michael Faraday is appointed laboratory assistant in the Royal Institution. |

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| 34-36 | 13 October 1813 to April 1815 | Leaves with Lady Davy, her maid, and Faraday for tour of France, Italy, Switzerland, and southern Germany. In Paris, establishes the elemental nature of iodine; in Florence, shows that diamond is made of carbon; climbs Vesuvius. |
| 36 | Mid-July to early October 1815 | Visits Northampton and Scotland. At Melrose, receives a letter from Robert Gray asking him to find a way of lighting coal mines safely. Visits Newcastle on return journey to investigate the problem. |
| 36-37 | October to December 1815 | Working with Faraday in the Royal Institution laboratory, develops miners' safety lamp made of wire gauze. |
| 37-40 | 1816 to 1818 | Bitter priority dispute with George Stephenson over the originality of the lamp and priority in invention. |
| 37 | 9 January 1816 | Prototype gauze lamps tested successfully in Hebburn Colliery. |
| | 30 November 1816 | Awarded Rumford Medal of the Royal Society of London. |
| 38 | June 1817 | Becomes involved in project to unroll papyri excavated from Herculaneum. |
| | Mid-July to mid-October 1817 | Visits Scotland and north-east England; mine-owners present him (11 October) with a silver service of plate worth more than £1000 for inventing the lamp. |
| 39 | 24 May 1818 | Audience with the Prince Regent who commands him to go to Naples to unroll the Herculaneum papyri. |
| 39-41 | June 1818 to June 1820 | Visits Flanders (to inspect the safety lamps there), Austria, and Italy (to work on unrolling the Herculaneum papyri). |
| 39 | 20 October 1818 | Created a baronet. |
| 41 | June to November 1820 | Following death of Banks (19 June), Davy successfully campaigns to be elected President of the Royal Society of London (30 November). |
| 44 | 21 January 1823 | Invited by Navy Board to investigate to how to protect the copper bottoms of Royal Navy ships, a project that occupies his attention for the next three years. |
| | 23 November 1823 | In exchange of correspondence with John Wilson Croker, suggests the establishment of a new elite club (later The Athenaeum Club, with Faraday as first unpaid secretary). |
| 45 | 19 to 20 February 1824 | Visits Portsmouth to inspect his method of protecting ships' copper. |
| 46 | 1825 | Severely criticised in private and in public for the practical failure of his method of protecting the copper bottoms of naval vessels. |

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| 47 | 3 September 1826 | Mother dies. |
| 48 | Late December 1826 | Suffers stroke. |
| | Late January to early October 1827 | Visits Italy and Carniola (modern Slovenia) (without Lady Davy); becomes increasingly ill as journey progresses. |
| | 1 July 1827 | Resigns as President of the Royal Society of London. |
| 49 | Late March to October 1828 | Travels with John James Tobin (but not Lady Davy) to Austria, Carniola. |
| 49-50 | November 1828 to April 1829 | Visits Italy. |
| 50 | 20 February 1829 | In Rome, suffers a second stroke and is joined by John Davy. |
| | 30 April 1829 | Begins return journey to London. |
| | 28 May 1829 | Arrives in Geneva and is joined by Lady Davy. |
| | 29 May 1829 | Dies in Geneva, around 3am in the morning. |
| | 1 June 1829 | Buried with full civic honours in the cemetery of Plain-Palais. |

By Frank James, with some (very minor) input from Andrew Lacey

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