

**Press release**

**Date: 29/04/2019**

**Ytterby, Sweden**

**EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award plaque unveiled at Ytterby mine, Sweden**

Ytterby mine, famous for being linked to the discovery site of some 8 chemical elements, celebrated the unveiling of a new European Chemical Society (EuChemS) plaque in recognition of the role it played in the history of Chemistry and shared European cultural heritage on Friday 26 and Saturday 27 April.

The mine was awarded the 2018 EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award at the European level following the recommendations of the Landmark Selection Committee and the decision of the EuChemS Executive Board.

The ceremony was preceded by a symposium on the history of the mine and its discoveries as well as the pivotal role it played in the history of chemistry in Europe. Over 100 people attended the symposium and the ceremony, including representatives from the Swedish Chemical Society, the local municipality, Ytterby town, the Ytterby Gruva Foundation, as well as from EuChemS.

EuChemS President Pilar Goya, together with Malin Forsbrand, Municipality Chairman, unveiled the plaque at the entrance of the mine.

EuChemS, which represents over 40 national chemical societies and by extension some 160,000 scientists put in place a Historical Landmarks Award programme in order to recognise and celebrate European sites that have a central role in the science of chemistry, whether at a European level or locally.

Ytterby mine is the first awardee of the programme.

Many rare earth elements were discovered in the mine, including yttrium (discovered in 1794), erbium (1842), terbium (1842), ytterbium (1878). The discovery of gadolinium, scandium, thulium, and holmium are also linked to the Ytterby mine.

The mine and the elements discovered there drew many scientists from Sweden, as well as from across the Nordic countries, and from further afield in Europe, making it a unique historical and scientific site of centuries worth of international collaboration and ventures.

The mine was officially closed in the early 1930s, and was subsequently used as a military storage facility for fuel during the Cold War. The programme was stopped in the mid-90s, after which the mine was emptied of fuel. Scientists have more recently begun studying the inside of the mine again, noting the existence of unique bacterial life forms on the walls. There are hopes that by 2025, the tunnels and the inside of the mine will be made open to visits by the public.

Ytterby is a village on the Swedish island of Resarö, Vaxholm Municipality in the Stockholm archipelago.

**Pilar Goya, EuChemS President, said:**

“EuChemS is proud to be able to recognise and celebrate a local historical site that played such a prominent role at the European, and indeed international level. Through the award we hope to better demonstrate the intrinsically linked relation between our shared history and cultural heritage with that of chemistry and scientific endeavours.”

**Brigitte Van Tiggelen, Chair of the Landmark Selection Committee and Chair of the EuChemS Working Party on the History of Chemistry said:**

“The EuChemS Historical Landmark programme aims at going beyond the exemplifying of micro-events by identifying sites that have impacted the chemical sciences and society at large. Because of its rich mineralogical diversity, and the discovery of so many rare elements which are at the basis of many contemporary technologies, Ytterby mine was definitely a node in a vibrant network in which materials, people, ideas and techniques have circulated to the benefit of all.”

**ENDS**

More information on the EuChemS Historical Landmarks Award can be seen here:

<https://www.euchems.eu/awards/euchems-historical-landmarks/>

**CONTACTS**

[www.euchems.eu](http://www.euchems.eu) | @EuChemS | [secretariat@euchems.eu](mailto:secretariat@euchems.eu) | tel: +32 (0)22892567 | Rue du Trône 62, 1050, Brussels, Belgium | Transparency Register number: 03492856440-03