

1<sup>st</sup> March – Henri Becquerel discovers radioactivity (1896)



**Henri Becquerel**

**Born**

15 December 1852

**Died**

25 August 1908



**Bq**

Becquerel shared the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1903 with Pierre and Marie Curie for the discovery of radioactivity. The unit of radioactivity, the Becquerel, is named after him.

## The discovery of radioactivity

In late February 1896, Henri Becquerel was experimenting with phosphorescent uranium salt crystals which glow for a time after exposure to sunlight. He placed the crystals on photographic paper, and saw that a black shadow was visible where the crystals were when the paper was developed. He initially thought the crystals were emitting X-rays when exposed to sunlight. However, on leaving the crystals on the paper in a dark cupboard during overcast days, he found shadows were still visible on the developed paper, and that the process was independent of sunlight. Marie Curie coined the term "radiation" in 1898.

