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Medical Anniversary

(Sir) ALEXANDER FLEMING, 6 AUGUST 1881

(Sir) Alexander Fleming (1881–1955) was born in Ayrshire into a farming community. He qualified from St Mary's Paddington (1908) where he became assistant to Sir Almroth Wright and eventually professor of bacteriology (1928). He discovered lysozyme (1922) an antimicrobial substance present in tears, leucocytes, saliva, mucus and cartilage, and called it the body's natural antibiotic. He is immortalised for his discovery of penicillin, however, for which he shared a Nobel prize with Howard Florey and Ernst Chain (1945). He became FRS (1943) and was knighted (1944). He died of a heart attack at his home in Chelsea on 11 March 1955 and is buried in St Paul's Cathedral.

— DG James