



The Royal College of Pathologists

Pathology: the science behind the cure

## Object 14: Mould medallion



### What is it?

This mould medallion is a sample of the *Penicillium* fungus set in a gold mount. Similar samples were presented by Alexander Fleming to a wide range of people including Winston Churchill, Pope Pius XII and Marlene Dietrich.

### History

Fleming was a Scottish microbiologist working at St Mary's Hospital in London. In 1928 he noticed that a discarded culture plate of the bacterium *Staphylococcus* showed death of bacterial colonies around areas where a mould had settled and grown. Fleming named the active substance released by the mould 'penicillin', after the *Penicillium* mould, from which it was derived.

### Pathology

Although Fleming first described and named penicillin, it was other teams of pathologists, including those led by Dorothy Hodgkin, Ernst Chain and Howard Florey, who turned his discovery into the antibiotic drugs we know today. Penicillin was one of the first antibiotics developed and is still widely used, although many bacteria have developed resistance to the drug.

### Find out more

You can still visit Fleming's laboratory, which has been turned into the [Fleming Museum](#) at St Mary's Hospital in London.

See how penicillin kills bacteria on the [Cells Alive website](#).