

No. XII.—**Notice of John Smith (1845-1930).** BY M.  
MACGREGOR, M.A., D.Sc.

JOHN SMITH'S association with the Geological Society of Glasgow, as ordinary member from 1865 and as honorary member from 1909, extended over the long period of sixty-five years. Accordingly, it seems fitting that a brief notice of his career and a list of his more important publications should be included in the *Transactions*. He was born on the 14th September, 1845, at Clarkston, near Airdrie. In the following year, however, his father, who was engaged in the mining industry, was transferred to Dalry in North Ayrshire, to superintend the opening of new shafts in the rich ironstone fields of that district. He went to school in Dalry and for some time attended Irvine Academy, and then proceeded to Glasgow to serve his apprenticeship in mining and surveying in the office of Messrs. W. and J. McCreath (now McCreaths and Stevenson). During his five years' residence in the city (about 1863-1868) he made many contacts with scientific workers; he joined the Geological Society, studied botany at Anderson's College under Professor R. Kennedy, well-known as the author of the "Clydesdale Flora," and attended classes in chemistry and astronomy.

On the completion of his apprenticeship he left Glasgow to take up an appointment with Messrs. W. Baird and Co. as under-manager at Lugar and two and a half years later (about 1870) became manager of the Eglinton Ironworks at Kilwinning, a position which he held for some nineteen years. The rest of his life was passed in retirement, first at Monkredding, two miles or so north-east of Kilwinning, then at Dykes Farm, two miles north-west of Dalry, and still later at Baidland Mains (1922-1930), about three miles west-north-west of Dalry. In the early part of 1930 the Geological Society of London awarded him the Murchison Fund in recognition of his many and distinguished services to geology (see *Quart. Journ. Geol. Soc.*, vol. 86, pp. li-iii), and in April of the same year he decided to carry out his expressed intention of presenting his valuable collections of fossils, etc. to the Geological Survey of Scotland. It was the writer's privilege to receive from Mr. Smith the letter in which he announced this

magnificent gift to the nation. A few weeks later the family with whom he had resided at Monkredding, Dykes and Baidlands in succession over a period of  $34\frac{1}{2}$  years removed to a house near Kilwinning and it was here that he died on the 30th November.

The bibliography appended illustrates the variety of subjects covered by his investigations. With the exception of the five early years in Glasgow, his whole life was passed in Ayrshire and it was to the study of the geology, natural history and archaeology of Ayrshire that he devoted his spare time and the years of retirement he enjoyed. He was widely recognised as an authority on the geology and palaeontology of the county. His assistance in the compilation of Young and Armstrong's "Catalogue of the Western Scottish Fossils" (Blackie and Sons, Glasgow, 1876) is acknowledged in the preface to that volume. He was invited to collaborate in the preparation of the "Handbook on the Natural History of Glasgow and the West of Scotland" for the meeting of the British Association held in Glasgow in 1901, and to this volume he contributed accounts of the Carboniferous and Permian rocks of the Clyde Drainage Area, lists of the Carboniferous sponges, conodonts and echinodermata, an account of the drift deposits, a list of the fossils of the Raised Beaches<sup>1</sup> and a list of localities for Old Red Sandstone and Carboniferous fossils. He was a thorough and careful observer and brought unflagging enthusiasm to the task of collecting and collating his material. No praise is too high for his skill in extracting fossils from the rocks and in freeing them from their matrix, or for the patience and labour involved in mounting and labelling them. His collections of fossils, chiefly Carboniferous, will long be a store-house of material for research. Some he described himself, others have been described and figured by fellow-workers in such publications as the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, the *Memoirs of the Palaeontographical Society*, etc. Over 26,000 specimens have been registered in the collections of the Geological Survey.

His interests took him into other fields of research. In 1895 there appeared his well-known volume on "Prehistoric Man in Ayrshire," in which he incorporated the results of long years of investigation into the evidences of early man in the county, and in 1896 he published his "Botany of Ayrshire by Parishes, from

<sup>1</sup> In collaboration with T. Scott and J. Steel.

Original Investigation." He also prepared and published a "List of the Butterflies and Moths of Ayrshire." To the columns of the *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* he was a constant contributor of articles dealing with the natural history and geology of the district in which he lived, and on numerous occasions conducted excursions to places of scientific interest in connection with meetings of geological and natural history societies. In such ways he did much to stimulate and encourage among others an interest in these subjects. He had considerable linguistic attainments; he taught himself Latin and Greek, could read French and German easily and translated some of Schiller's poems into braid Scots; he had some knowledge of Spanish and Italian also and at one time contemplated a translation of Burns into Gaelic.

Two things should be remembered in considering his legacy of scientific work. First, he had no formal training in geology and palaeontology, and, second, he led from about 1890 onwards a life of self-imposed retirement and immersion in the tasks to which he had set his hand. There is a story told of his last days as manager of the Eglinton Ironworks, how his employers had to remonstrate with him as regards the time he devoted to his geological researches, and finally had to inform him that he must choose between these and his official work. His reply, characteristically enough, was to the effect that "the work would just have to go." He was an outstanding example of the born naturalist, animated and sustained by an intense desire to find out all he could about the world around him and to hand on the knowledge he won for others to add to. He did not spare himself in this task and made long, and indeed at times incredible, journeys on foot in search of material. He records in one of his books that he had traversed "nearly every inch" of Ayrshire in search of the data necessary to complete it. His conclusions have in some cases been corrected or modified by the investigations of later workers but his observations and records remain as a permanent legacy, while his palaeontological collections alone, amassed throughout many years of patient and assiduous labour, constitute an invaluable contribution to Scottish science.

Many interesting details regarding his life and work, and the contacts he made, will be found in the little Biography by his friend Mr. A. Boyd, published in 1930. (103 pp. A. Guthrie and Sons, Ardrossan).

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