



# THE WILLIAM SHIPLEY GROUP FOR RSA HISTORY

Newsletter 44: February 2015

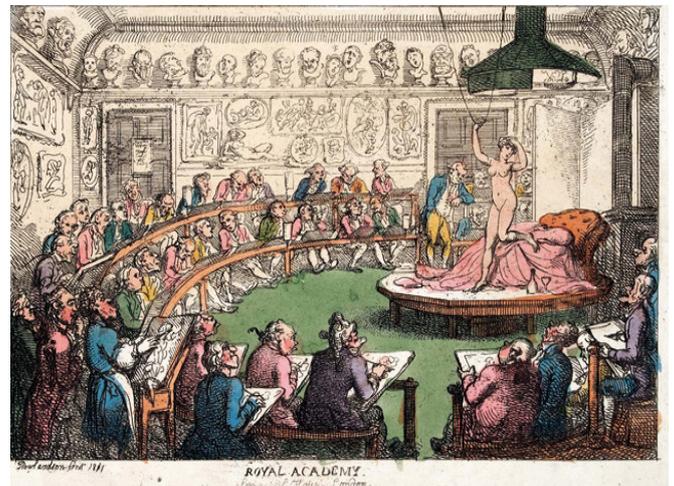
**2015** marks the **tercentenary** of the birth of William Shipley (1715-1803) founder of the RSA and a drawing master. To mark the occasion this year's symposium is on early drawing schools. The RSA has kindly agreed to sponsor a plaque on the site of Rawthmells Coffee House, where he held the foundation meeting of the Society, dependent on the necessary permissions.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Friday 6 March 2015** at 11.00am. **WSG Annual General Meeting.** Council Room, Medical Society of London, Lettsom House, 11 Chandos Street, London W1G 9EB. The AGM will be followed by a report from Susan Bennett, WSG Honorary Secretary on her **RDI Network of Design** project

**Friday 27 March 2015** from 9.30am to 7.00pm. WSG Symposium. **Drawing: A Pre-Eminent Skill.** In the Life Drawing Room, Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BD

Thanks to the generosity of the Tavalozza Foundation and the Royal Academy we have been able to organise this symposium on 18th century drawing schools to mark the tercentenary of the birth of William Shipley (1715-1803), drawing master and founder of the RSA. Speakers include the RSA Historian Dr D.G.C. Allan on Shipley's drawing school. Contact Susan Bennett, WSG Honorary Secretary for the programme and booking form or download from the WSG website <http://www.williamshipleygroup.btck.co.uk>



**Thursday 2 April 2015** at 6.30pm. **Jack Howe: A Designed Life.** The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ. Ticket price £10 (includes a glass of wine)

Industrial designer and architect Jack Howe was elected RDI in 1961 and served as Master of the Faculty from 1975 to 1977. He worked as an assistant to Walter Gropius and Maxwell Fry, and was responsible for making Gropius's design for Impington Village College, near Cambridge, buildable within a tight budget. Howe then developed a career as an industrial designer. For more information and to book a ticket see <http://c20.datawareonline.co.uk/Default.aspx?tabid=62&EventId=386>

**Tuesday 9 June 2015** at 5.30pm. **Lord Folkestone and the Society of Arts: Picturing the First President** by Amelia Smith. Joint meeting with Birkbeck's 18th century Research Group at the Keynes Library, School of Arts, Birkbeck College, 46 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PD.

This talk will draw on research from the RSA archives and the Radnor papers housed at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, to explore the life of Jacob Bouverie, 1st Viscount Folkestone (1694-1761) in relation to his role as first President of the Society of Arts. The talk will introduce Lord Folkestone, his family background, his role as an eighteenth-century art collector and patron at his family seat, Longford Castle, and his involvement in the creation of the Society of Arts. The posthumous portrait of Lord Folkestone painted by Thomas Gainsborough, from an original by Thomas Hudson, for the Society of Arts, which hangs today in the RSA's Great Room, will then be discussed, focusing particularly on the commissioning process.



## EXHIBITIONS

**Drawn by Light: The Royal Photographic Society Collection.** National Media Museum, Bradford, West Yorkshire BN1 1NQ. 20 March to 21 June 2015. Free Entry

The Society of Arts provided a room for the first meetings of the Royal Photographic Society and in recognition of the Society's encouragement and support the RPS returned to its birthplace in 1953 for its centenary meeting. Over 200 photographs have been selected from the RPS collection of over 250,000 images, now held at the National Media Museum, to illustrate the story of photography from the earliest known images dating back to 1820 through to contemporary works by photographs such as Don McCullin and Terry O'Neill



*Detail from Roger Fenton, Still Life with Ivory Tankard and Fruit, c.1860.*

**Great British Drawings.** Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH. 26 March to 31 August 2015. £7.00 entry fee.

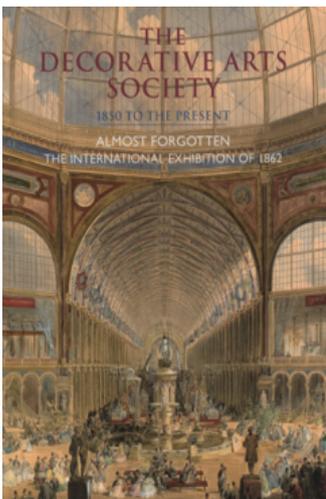
This exhibition will showcase one of the world's largest collection of British drawings and watercolours held at the Ashmolean. The 100 works selected, many being shown to the public for the first time, trace the history of drawing in Britain, from examples of Flemish artists working in Britain in the 16th and 17th centuries to British artists experiments in modernism after the First World War.

**History is Now: 7 Artists Take on Britain.** Hayward Gallery, Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1. 10 February - 26 April 2015. £10.90 entry.

Taking inspiration from the 1946 'Britain Can Make It' exhibition which featured the work of many RDIs, including Misha Black, Ashley Havinden and Brian O'Rorke, the Hayward Gallery has invited seven artists to reflect on key moments in British culture since the end of the Second World War for this show.

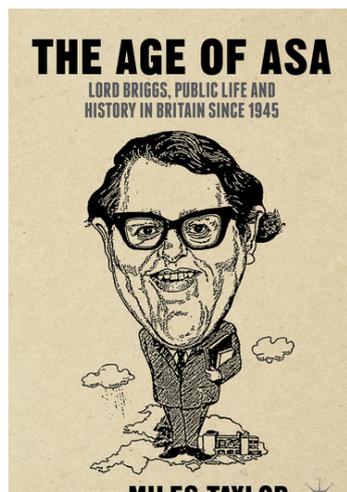
## RDI HONOURED

Fashion designer Mary Quant RDI has been made a Dame in the Queen's 2015 New Year Honours List for her services to British fashion. Dame Mary Quant said: "I am absolutely delighted to have been awarded this terrific honour. It is extremely gratifying that my work in the fashion industry has been recognised and acknowledged in such a significant way." Mary Quant was appointed an RDI in 1969



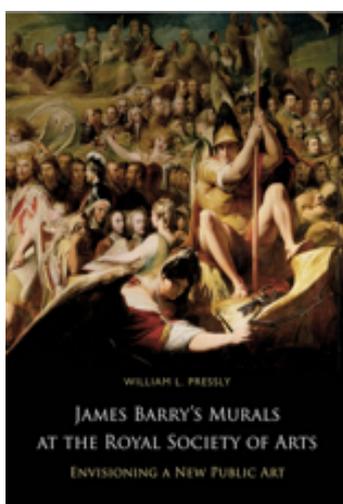
## ALMOST FORGOTTEN. THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF 1862

Thanks to the support of the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Giles Waterfield the Decorative Arts Society were able to produce this special edition of their Journal based on the contributions to the 2012 WSG conference of the same name. This is the first publication in over 150 years dedicated to this previously overlooked exhibition, with articles on the building itself, furniture in the medieval court, jewellery, medals, modern art, machinery in motion and other aspects of this exhibition. Normally priced at £25, members of the William Shipley Group can buy this beautifully illustrated volume at the special rate of £20. Please send your order to Richard Dennis Publications, The New Chapel, Shepton Beauchamp, Ilminster, Somerset TA19 9JT. Tel:01460 240044 or email [books@richarddenispublishations.com](mailto:books@richarddenispublishations.com)



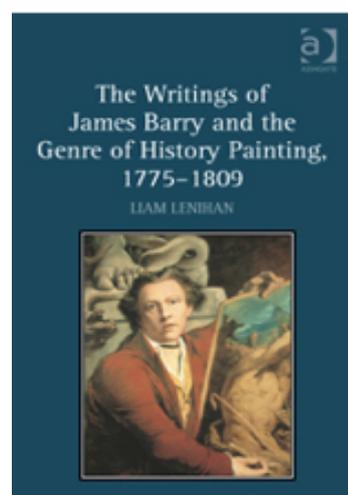
**The Age of Asa. Lord Briggs, Public Life and History in Britain since 1945** edited by Miles Taylor. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. ISBN 978-1137392572.

The WSG Honorary President Asa Briggs has been a prominent figure in post-war cultural life - as a pioneering historian, a far-sighted educational reformer, and a sensitive chronicler of the way in which broadcasting and communication more generally have shaped modern society. He has also been a devoted servant of the public good, involved in many inquiries, boards and trusts. Yet few accounts of public life in Britain since the Second World War include a discussion or appreciation of his influential role. This collection of essays provides the first critical assessment of Asa Briggs' career, using fresh research and new perspectives to analyse his contribution and impact on scholarship, the expansion of higher education at home and overseas, and his support and leadership for the arts and media more generally



**James Barry. Murals at the Royal Society of Arts: Envisioning a New Public Art** by William L. Pressly. Cork: Cork University Press (2014) £40

**The Writings of James Barry and the Genre of History Painting, 1775-1809** by Liam Lenihan. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014. £60



William Pressly's beautifully produced book represents the culmination of three decades of work by the author. It has 395 pages of text and 94 illustrations. Could there be, I asked Bill, room for yet another study of Barry's oeuvre. He replied by asking me if I thought it inappropriate to revisit the work of Leonardo. I was glad of the response linking our Irish history painter with a Renaissance genius he included in the Elysium. As a fellow 'labourer in the vineyard' who may claim some credit in guiding Bill on his long journey, I salute this new review.

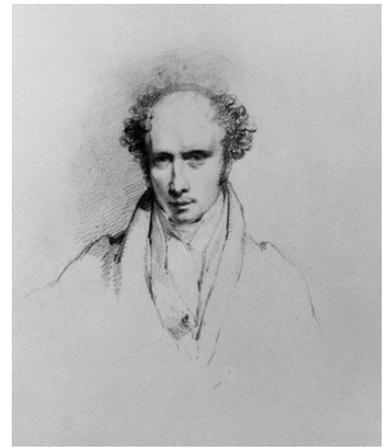
In contrast Liam Lenihan examines James Barry's literary career in this full-length study of the artist's writings, from Barry's *Inquiry* into public taste, his *Lectures on Painting* and his guide to 'The Progress of Human Culture' at the RSA. He considers the connections between Barry's writings and art, and the cultural and political issues that were dominant at this time. The work undertaken by Liam Lenihan shows us that Barry remains of constant interest.

*D.G.C. Allan*  
Honorary President, WSG



PHILIP ATTWOOD

**Hard at Work. The Diary of Leonard Wyon 1853-1867** by Philip Attwood. British Numismatic Society Publication SP9. London: Spink, 2014  
Leonard Wyon was the leading medallist and coin engraver in Britain during the period covered by this diary. His coins and medals circulated around the globe: as the numismatist Richard Sainthill, Wyon's old friend and patron, mused, 'How few of Queen Victoria's subjects have seen Her Majesty, yet thanks to money and medals Her Portrait is as a household deity from London to Lahore! While through the same power, the past remains an existing World to us, and will remain so for unknown future generations.'



*William Wyon by  
William Brockendon, 1825*

Wyon's bun penny, for which Victoria sat on a number of occasions, became one of the most famous and widely circulated images of the Queen and remained in circulation well into the mid 20th century. His numerous and beautiful coinages for Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, Nova Scotia and India and his war, Arctic and Foreign Office medals ensured that his work was constantly in the public eye.

So the publication of Leonard Wyon's diary, meticulously annotated so that every work and every contact is fully elucidated, is a real boon to everyone who wants to know more about the creation and circulation of images of Victoria as well as those with a specialist interest in the coins and medals of the period.

The diary is illuminating about Leonard Wyon's working practices. He was very conscientious about research, seeking out the best authorities for advice on the flora and fauna of the colonies whose coinage he was to design, going to the British and South Kensington museums and the National Gallery to seek out the images and information that he needed for his medallic work, demanding at least three and normally many more sittings for a portrait and commissioning enlarged photographs of his subject when sittings were difficult or impossible, as with Princess Alexandra before her marriage to the Prince of Wales. He and his wife went to the Royal Academy Summer exhibition several times each year and they visited artist's studios and other exhibiting societies.

He read Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, liked Dyce and the Pre Raphaelites but quickly went off Millais and found Holman Hunt 'deficient in holiness'. He had strong links with fellow medallists elsewhere, Kullrich, Voigt and Barre all feature, but thought little of their work.

Wyon used models for his figure studies, went out to sketch lions in the zoo, sheep in the field, or plants at Kew. He sought advice and drawings from others, and was content to copy another artist's work when requested to do so: on one occasion he suggested Marochetti as a sculptor whose work of sufficient quality for him to follow without unease. But he could be very critical of his fellow sculptors. Of Thomas Banks he wrote 'the genius of that artist appears to me to have been greatly over-rated' and even more damningly that his *Falling Titan* was 'good but not interesting'.

He modelled in wax and clay, had his model cast in bell metal, created puncheons, matrices and dies using a reducing machine and relied on Pinches, or the Royal Mint for the reproduction of dies and for striking coins and medals.

The diary is also informative about the rhythm of his work. He began early and broke off at dinner time around 2 or 3 in the afternoon, before setting out for his daily walk. Wyon never worked on Sundays, took a four to six week tour on the continent each summer, an autumn break of a week or ten days and numerous weekends to visit his family when they were in the country or at the seaside. Though successful and prosperous he did almost all the work himself, including the endless hardening and softening, engraving and re-engraving of dies. When war medals had to be packed into envelopes or turned on the reducing machine his wife May came to his aid, Wyon cousins were paid to assist when many goldsmiths' punches were required, and their servants were roped in when many hands were needed. But he never seems to have felt the need to develop a workshop with paid assistants.

Wyon made a good income, which he reckoned for the purposes of income tax at between £600 and £1,400 a year. He had inherited a small fortune from his father William and had considerable investments in government consols, the East India Company and property. Even so his lifestyle as an engraver/medallist was startlingly comfortable. He and May started their married life in a pretty house overlooking the Regent's Canal [current value £17m] and moved after endless house hunting to 54 Hamilton Terrace, a bigger house but further from the centre [current value £11m]. They had four or five servants living in, cook, maids, nurse and under nurse [for the children] and a gardener and charwoman who lived out. They took a house in the country in the summer, or lodgings in a seaside resort, they travelled extensively on the continent every year, entertained their friends to dinner, kept a good cellar and gave to the church and the poor.

One of the enjoyable things about this diary is that it gives an unexpectedly intimate portrait of a certain kind of Victorian family life. Leonard and his wife were pious church goers, whose conversation clearly revolved a good deal around the merits and demerits of the various preachers whose churches they patronised [the Archbishop of Canterbury was described as 'infirm, indistinct and by no means talented. He certainly brings a good deal of discredit on the Church of England by preaching']. But they were frequently dissatisfied, always trying out a new chapel or church, Anglican or Non-Conformist and more than once abandoning their regular church for another. They were highly conventional, and yet surprisingly spontaneous, setting out unannounced to visit relations and friends in Ireland and reciprocally being visited by a friend from Germany or relatives quite unexpectedly.

'Dear May has been very busy and as happy as a bird all day' reads an entry early in the diary, when they were young and in love and had only one child. But this seems to have been noted as an exception. As time went on May, had frequent hysterics, while Leonard suffered from insomnia and toothache. One entry, for August 13 1856, tells us that 'the housemaid is ill, & May very hysteric, besides Arthur [their son] in a very bad state of health'. As a result Aunt Jane, who was living with them, and for whom little hope of recovery was entertained, decided to move out. Two weeks later Aunt Anne was found 'groaning in a state of apathy', and both her nurse and the Wyon's nurse became 'quite ill by their exertions'. May's hysterics seem to have been brought on by her only too frequent pregnancies and by servant problems: 'saw several housemaids... May had two violent fits of hysterics' is a not untypical sequence. Their Doctor, who comes over as a nice and sensible man, nevertheless treated one of their infants, a few days old, by sending away the wet-nurse and prescribing beef tea and brandy with the sad if predictable result that the baby died.

Philip Attwood's book is a fascinating and scholarly addition to our understanding of a significant area of artistic practice in mid 19th century Britain, which neatly complements James Hamilton's *A Strange Business* and also affords a touching and delightful insight into Victorian family life.

*Sir Mark Jones*  
*Master, St Cross College*



*RSA Albert Medal  
designed by W. Wyon*



Pat Francis, **Habits of Thrift and Industry: Improving Bethnal Green.** WSG Occasional Paper no.27. 2014 £8.00 (plus £1.25 p&p)

RSA Director of Creative Learning and Development Joe Hallgarten wrote in his RSA blog that the WSG Occasional Paper was his favourite education book of 2014. *Habits of Thrift and Industry: Improving Bethnal Green* by Pat Francis offers a fascinating biography of educationalist and energetic..activist George Bartley.... It also reprints in full his seminal inquiry One Square Mile in the East End of London, commissioned by the (as then named) Society of Arts in 1870... It's a brilliant read. Whilst there are clear resonances with current education debates (note in particular the description of 'free schools', as well as an account of how the now painfully trendy Cat and Mutton pub used to house 27 families) the purpose of this blog is simply to encourage others to buy or borrow a copy from the RSA library. See complete review at <http://www.rsablogs.org.uk/2014/education/one-square-mile/#more-23977>. The East London Historical Society also included a review of this work in their Winter 2014-15 newsletter

## OBITUARIES

### RONALD GERARD OBE, KStJ (1925-2015)

RSA and WSG benefactor Ronald Gerard passed away peacefully at home on 10 January 2015. He rose from humble beginnings in Hackney to become a successful property developer. A generous supporter, in every level, of county cricket in Middlesex he was only the second person to become President of the MCC without playing for the club. Brooklands Motor Museum, Chelsea Hospital and the RSA were among the many recipients of his generous patronage.. He gave over £50,000 for the cleaning and restoration of the Barry murals in the Great Room, he covered the costs for the restoration of the Tavern Room ceiling, and provided the Fellows with the 'Gerard Bar' - and funded its refurbishment in 2008. The William Shipley Group owe him an enormous debt of gratitude as his annual donations to the group's funds have enabled us to continue to raise awareness of the RSA's rich and varied history.



### HERMIONE HOBHOUSE (1934-2014)

WSG member, architectural historian and conservationist Hermione Hobhouse died last October at the age of 80. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries she was appointed an MBE in 1981. Her many acclaimed publications include an acclaimed biography of *Thomas Cubitt, Master Builder*. Her most influential work *Lost London* (1972) provided a lucid and compelling argument for preservation of London's key historic buildings during a time of modern redevelopment in the city. Hermione Hobhouse also wrote authoritatively on the work of the Royal Commissioners of the Great Exhibition of 1851, surveying their role in promoting art, science and productive industry over one hundred and fifty years. She kindly arranged a room at the Albert Hall for a WSG meeting where she spoke on 'The Great Exhibition of 1851. Its significance and achievements and the role of the Society of Arts in bringing it about.'

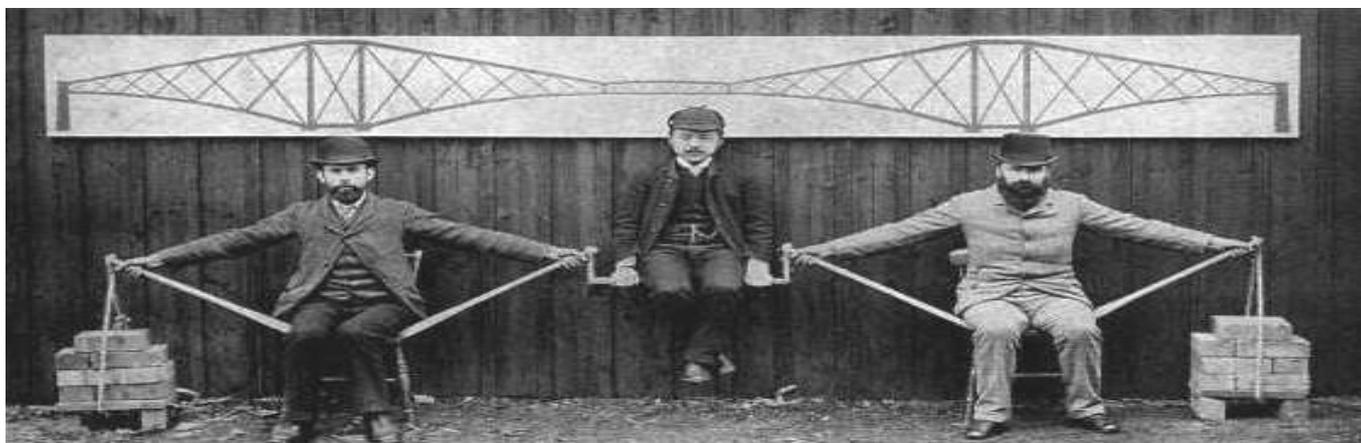


## OLIVER RACKHAM (1939-2015)

Professor Oliver Rackham studied the British countryside, especially trees, woodlands and wood pasture and in 1998 he was awarded the OBE for 'services to Nature Conservation'. Eight years earlier he had visited John Adam Street to give the RSA's Reflection Riding Memorial Lecture on 'Landscape and the Conservation of Meaning'. In his opening Professor Rackham remarked that from its foundation the Society had been concerned, among other things, with the development of the landscape. See *RSA Journal* vol. 139 (1991), pp.903-915 for the full text of his paper.

## ANNIVERSARIES

**2015** marks the **175th** anniversary of the birth of the engineer Sir Benjamin Baker (1840-1907). **2015** also marks the **125th** anniversary of the Forth Bridge, which was the subject of the paper he read to the Society a year before its formal opening in 1890. The Forth Bridge and the Barrage of the Nile, which he designed with Sir John Fowler, are considered his most important works and his labours were recognised with a knighthood. Sir Benjamin became a member of the Society of Arts in 1884, served on the Council in 1888, and was elected a Vice-President in 1900. He was re-elected Vice-President in 1906 and remained in this role until his death. He also took the chair at a number of the Society's meetings, including 'Aerial Navigation' by Major Baden-Powell. Baker was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1890 and served as President of the Institution of Civil Engineers 1895-96.



*Sir Benjamin Baker devised this demonstration of the cantilever principle for his design of the Forth Bridge for a Royal Institution lecture (1887)*



**2015** marks the **110th** anniversary of the death of Charles, 4th Earl of Romney (1841-1905). With his election in 1880 he maintained his family's long connection with the Society. He was the great-great-grandson of Robert, 2nd Lord Romney, founder member and second President of the Society of Arts. The 4th Earl took a great interest in the mercantile marine and held the office of President of the Marine Society, a position previously held by his great-great-grandfather.

2015 marks the **bicentenary** of the Society's award to William Smith for his mineralogical map of England. John Henry, Chairman of the History of Geology Group, Geological Society of London has written the following appreciation of Smith and his work.

For further information see <http://historyofgeologygroup.co.uk/william-smith-conference-200-years-of-smiths-map/>

## William Smith, Father of English Geology: his maps

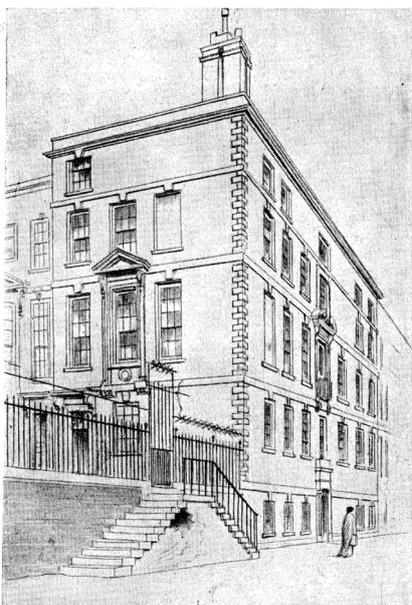
In 1815, William Smith (1769–1839) published *A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales with part of Scotland*, the first geological map of a nation. A remarkable accomplishment by any standard, for one man working alone pursuing a then unique geological concept, it was an outstanding achievement for which Smith is known as ‘the father of English geology’. In the same year, the [R]SA granted Smith its award for a mineralogical map of England, which had been on offer since 1803. For his fieldwork, Smith used many of the one inch county topographical maps that had received [R]SA awards.

This year is the bicentenary of Smith’s great map. Many events are planned for 2015 to celebrate Smith’s life through exhibitions, public lectures and walks that show his maps and works and tell parts of his story. These events are published within the Geological Society’s website on, [www.williamsmith2015.org](http://www.williamsmith2015.org).

Smith lived at 15 Buckingham Street, just around the corner from the RSA, from 1804 to 1819. A green plaque memorialising Smith will be unveiled at this address at 4.30pm on 23rd March, 2015 - Smith’s birthday. (Green plaques are Westminster City Council’s alternative to English Heritage’s blue plaques which may not be used on modern buildings that have replaced the original).

Smith’s life began in unpromising circumstances. However, his intelligence, great perseverance and his contagious interest and enthusiasm enabled him to overcome the disadvantages of his limited formal education and the class system to become, in his life time, ‘the father of English geology’. His life reads like a melodrama in *The Map that changed the World*, (1999) by Simon Winchester and it certainly had its ups and downs. This brief article touches on the outline of his life and his great achievement and contribution to science.

William Smith was born in Churchill, Oxfordshire, son of a blacksmith who died when he was eight. He left the village school around the age of eleven. His talent for observing and drawing was recognised by an uncle who acquired books on geometry and surveying to encourage him. When Churchill was being surveyed for the enclosure of its commons, an apprenticeship was secured for him in 1787 with the surveyor, Edward Webb, of Stow-on-the-Wold, who proved an ideal mentor to an apt pupil. Young Smith was given a great deal of personal responsibility, working widely in surrounding counties. Webb encouraged the recording of soils, rocks and drainage during the survey as part of land evaluation.



Smith’s home in Buckingham Street,  
1883



William Smith by  
Hughes Foureau, c.1835

In 1791 Smith was sent to Stowey, near Bath, to survey land including collieries there. Now Smith descended mineshafts to measure the thickness of coal seams and intervening rock strata, and plot the geological faults displacing the seams. He was evidently very good at his work and his abilities and interest in the rocks that he was surveying were noted. In the same year, when local land owners proposed to construct two branch canals to link their mines to the planned Kennet and Avon Canal, they formed the Somersetshire Coal Canal Company and appointed Smith, then age 24, as their Engineer. Two of his directors invited him to join them in the summer of 1794 on 'a tour of enquiry and observation regarding the construction, management, and trade of other navigations in England and Wales'.

In his local work Smith noticed that in very similar rocks, be they limestones or sandstones or mudstones, the imbedded fossils, while similar, had minute differences which were unique to particular strata and persistent over considerable distances. He understood that he had discovered a powerful predictive tool; today we would call it a conceptual model. With this model he could know, from his observations at the surface, the underlying rock formations and their approximate depths and thicknesses. In practical terms, he could locate coal, quality dimension stone, and water. Conversely, he knew that, in many localities, drilling for coal was pointless, due to its absence or great depth. However, in the beginning he was often ignored.

His trip to the North confirmed to him that his local observations could be extrapolated over the south and east of England and he formed the idea of a geological map covering the whole country.

Through his directors and the landowners he encountered in the course of his work, Smith met many influential people in fashionable Bath, some of whom shared his geological interest and assembled 'cabinets' of fossils. Smith observed that collectors considered fossils only as ornaments or curiosities. With his particular insight into fossil occurrences and rock sequence, he offered to organise collectors' fossils in their order of deposition. In this way the significance of his system of strata began slowly to be appreciated.

Among his many acquaintances, the Rev. Benjamin Richardson, who became a friend for life, was particularly well informed about local fossils, although completely unaware of stratigraphy, which is the branch of geology that Smith founded. As Phillips records, "the result of the meeting between two such reciprocally adjusted minds was an electric combination".<sup>1</sup> In 1799, when Smith left the canal company, Richardson recorded, from Smith's dictation, *Order of the Strata and their embedded Organic Remains*, which was used later to assert Smith's claim to have first discovered this concept.

Major landowners whom Smith met in Bath offered opportunities to work at Holkham in Norfolk and Woburn in Bedfordshire. Thus, Smith began a peripatetic career that took him around the country on a variety of applied or engineering geological projects including slope stabilisation, marsh reclamation, sea wall and canal construction and prospecting for coal and water. According to the task, he described himself as land drainer, civil engineer or mineral surveyor. He travelled up to 10,000 miles per year to and between projects, enabling him to inspect a wide variety of terrains and collect rock samples and fossils from all over the country. He kept detailed notes and annotated maps wherever he went but found little time to develop the book and map that were on his mind.

Smith attended agricultural fairs at Holkham and Woburn between 1801 and 1807. At these fairs, he became known as 'Strata' Smith, speaking of the utility of geology and showing a small schematic geological map of England and Wales in order to attract subscribers for a more detailed and larger scale version of it. An early supporter of his proposed map was Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, to whom the 1815 map was dedicated.

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1 All quotations are from John Phillips, *The Memoirs of William Smith, LL.D., author of the "Map of the Strata of England and Wales"*, 1844. The Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution published a reproduction in 2003, with an introduction, effective index and a substantial lecture by Hugh Torrens, the eminent scholar of William Smith (ISBN 0 9544 9410 5)

Smith's fundamental problem, true for many one man consultancies, was that he found it difficult to turn down work. He was very much in demand and, while his widespread projects allowed opportunities to gather geological information, collect samples and annotate local maps, the long hours of work and travel left insufficient time to write up the accumulated data.

An early business arrangement to publish a smaller map and guide collapsed with the bankruptcy of Debrett's in 1803. Despite his consultant's rates he was generally in financial difficulties due to extended travel while mapping on his own account; the support and schooling of his orphaned nephew, John Phillips; delays in completing reports and, therefore getting paid; unwise investments.

Despite not finding another publisher, and not having the time or resources to publish a map himself, Smith carried on accumulating facts. In 1812, the eminent cartographer, John Cary, based nearby on the Strand, came to his assistance with an offer to produce Smith's map and pay Smith a proportion of the income from the map. Cary engraved a new map, based on his earlier 1794 atlas, reducing the clutter of place names and county boundaries and by increasing drainage detail and adding Smith's geological boundaries. Cary had the financial resources and production facilities to engrave, print, colour and publish Smith's grand map.

The map, approximately 8 x 6 feet, was hand coloured and took time to produce; the first one, for the [R] SA, took a week to colour. Smith's rigorous checking for accuracy and quality of colouring meant initially many copies were returned for correction, initially causing delays and extra costs.

Although 400 subscribers were listed, Smith anticipated selling 750 copies; in the event, not all subscribers paid and it is thought about 370 maps were produced. Today, about 70 surviving 1815 maps are known. Financially, it was a failure.

Why? That it was published in the depression which followed the end of the Napoleonic War may have been a factor. Secondly, it was generally known that the Geological Society of London (founded 1807) was working on its own soon-to-be-published national geological map which, as a collaborative rather than one man effort, was expected to be better. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that Smith's maps, and the GSL's, appeared before their time. It was not until the 1830's that geology gained wider public recognition as a controversial and 'cutting-edge' science that had practical applications in an expanding industrialising economy. Throughout the Victorian period many national geological maps were successfully published.

During this period of frenetic publishing effort, and on-going consulting work, Smith was jailed in debtor's prison for ten weeks in the summer of 1819. This followed the failure of a quarry railway investment. He was forced to sell his property on the Somerset Coal Canal. He lost the lease of his London house. His furniture, possessions and books were sold. He fled London and began a peripatetic life in the North at the age of 50 with his nephew John Phillips, age 19. During this period of no fixed address, he continued with various consulting projects and, with Phillips, undertook long traverses – geological walks – still adding to his knowledge of detail.

When the GSL's map was eventually issued in Feb, 1820, it bore the name of George Bellas Greenough (1778-1855), founder member of the GSL, its first president and chair of its map committee; significantly, his loan financed the production of the map. As anticipated, it was in many ways a better map. It had more rock units and, in some areas, more detail; but much of it appeared to be heavily plagiarised. Smith wrote, on receiving Greenough's map, "this copy seemed like the ghost of my old map, mocking me in the disappointments of a science....It was put out of sight".

Cary continued to support Smith, evidently believing that there must be a market for geological information. Anticipating the impact of the forthcoming GSL map, he encouraged Smith to develop and publish his information in other ways. He published Smith's geological sections between 1817 and 1819. He persuaded James Sowerby, the great illustrator to produce coloured engravings of Smith's fossils in 1817 for Smith's Strata Identified by Organic Fossils – never completed. Cary produced a poster-sized reduction of the great



William Smith, *A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales with part of Scotland*, 1815  
 ©Daniel Crouch Rare Books, [crouchrarebooks.com](http://crouchrarebooks.com)

*Rotunda Museum,  
 Scarborough, 2008*



1815 map in 1820. He encouraged Smith to enlarge his geology using county maps from Cary's New English Atlas. This last project, A New Geological Atlas of England and Wales was issued in 'parts' of four counties beginning in 1819.

The County Geological Atlas project collapsed in 1824, half completed, after the issue of six parts. Cary's sons had inherited the business when John Cary retired in 1820, aged 67. His sons were apparently more financially hard-headed than their father and they had other business interests. The abrupt halt of the county atlas production – half engraved plates, half-finished manuscripts – suggests they ran out of patience with Smith.

Around this time, the recently formed Yorkshire Philosophical Society invited William Smith to give a course of lectures on geology at York. Smith threw himself into the preparations. "New maps were coloured, new sections drawn, and even the distant cabinet (collection) of Mr. Richardson...was laid under contribution to supply illustrations for these discourses". The initial course of eight lectures, assisted by John Phillips, was warmly received and successful. Over the next several months the course was repeated, with variations, in Scarborough, Hull, Sheffield, and Wakefield. These popular lectures led to introductions and opportunities for both Smith and Phillips. Principal among these was the request of Sir John Johnstone that Smith map his estate at Hackness. This quickly developed into an invitation to be his land-steward. Smith lived at Hackness "for six of the happiest and calmest years of his declining life" producing a very detailed geological map of the estate at 6.5 inches to the mile. Johnstone was instrumental in realising Smith's vision of a geological museum, the first in the world, which opened in 1829 and still exists today as the Rotunda Museum in Scarborough.

After a life of single-minded effort mapping the geology of England, and Wales, and financial problems culminating in prison and 'homeless' wandering between jobs in middle age, Smith found the recognition that he deserved. The Rotunda Museum displayed fossils in cabinets arranged according to his principles of stratigraphy. In 1831, the GSL awarded Smith its highest honour, the first Wollaston Medal, and praised Smith as, 'the father of English geology'. The GSL's public reversal of a great wrong was very much appreciated by Smith. In 1832, the Crown gave Smith an annual pension of £100 which enabled him to retire to Scarborough. In 1835, at the Dublin meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), Trinity College awarded Smith an honorary Doctorate. Smith attended the annual meetings of the BAAS, founded in York by the YPS in 1831, where he was the congenial grand old man of geology. It was while on his way to the 1839 BAAS meeting that Smith caught a chill and died.

Although useless to Smith, posterity also recognises his great achievement and the injustice he experienced; his 1815 map today typically fetches six to eight times the value of Greenough's rarer and more detailed map. William Smith introduced geology as a practical science useful to agriculture, construction and mineral prospecting, and devoted his life to producing a geological map of his country, the first of its kind in the world.

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