FROM THE ARCHIVES

Andrew Templeman and Strata Smith

On the afternoon of Sunday 20 December 1945, Andrew Templeman, Inspector of Borings and Shafts with the Geological Survey, was descending a 50-foot trial shaft for coal at High Seaton, near Workington, when he was overcome by carbon dioxide poisoning and fell to his death. Another man, John James McCabe, went to his rescue and suffered the same fate. About two and a half years later, Templeman's collection of rare books and manuscripts was auctioned by Hodgson & Co. of Chancery Lane, London, and it became clear that this rather reserved and seemingly un-ambitious man had in life been a most extraordinary bibliophile.

Templeman was born 22 April 1887 in Aberdeen. Following his discharge from the Army at the end of the First World War he applied for the position of Fossil Collector with the Geological Survey, to which he was appointed 2 February 1920. After the passing of the Mining Industry Act of 1926 he was assigned the position of bore inspector England and Wales to examine cores of borings and shafts notified under this Act, both at the surface and underground. His knowledge of stratigraphy thus became extensive, and his particular admiration of the work of William 'Strata' Smith led him to assemble an unrivalled personal collection of the works of Smith and other geological pioneers.

Although married, there were no children, which presumably enabled Templeman, who never rose above the rank of Assistant, to expend a sufficient portion of his modest earnings on the acquisition of rare books, manuscripts and drawings. He was thus able to acquire every one of Smith's published works, including very rare prospectuses and lithographed sections.

David G Bate & Andrew L Morrison

Geological Survey staff at the British Gazette, appointed as cleaners during the General Strike in 1926. Left to right: J Pringle, S W Hester, A Templeman, C P Chatwin (BGS photo P827761).

And the report of Templeman's death in the Daily Telegraph in December 1945.

Two die in shaft

RESCUER KILLED

From Our Own Correspondent

WORKINGTON, Sunday.

MR. ANDREW TEMPLEMAN, an assistant geologist of the Geological Survey and Museum, Exhibitoin Road, S.W., and Mr. John McCabe, of Seaton, near Workington, were killed this afternoon in a new shaft being sunk under the direction of a department of the Ministry of Mines dealing with open-cast coal production.

While descending a ladder Mr. Templeman fell 50 yards to the bottom of the shaft. Mr. McCabe, who volunteered to go to his rescue, failed to return.

A third man, Mr. Conway, after three attempts, brought the body of Mr. McCabe to the surface.

In the evening a rescue party recovered the body of Mr. Templeman.