FROM THE ARCHIVES

Green on Greenstone

Alexander Henry Green was born at Maidstone in 1832, the son of the Rev. T. S. Green, a classical scholar and Master of Ashby-de-la Zouch Grammar School, where A. H. Green received his initial education before entering Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. In 1861 he was appointed Assistant Geologist at the Geological Survey of England and Wales, attaining the rank of Geologist in 1867.

During his time with the Survey he worked initially in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire before transferring to the Yorkshire and north Derbyshire coalfield. He was sole or joint author of a number of Geological Survey one-inch-to-the-mile sheet memoirs, including those for Banbury (1864), Stockport (1866), Tadcaster (1870), Dewsbury (1871), Barnsley (1878), and Wakefield (1879). He jointly authored a district memoir on *The geology of the Carboniferous Limestone, Yoredale rocks, and Millstone Grit of north Derbyshire* (1869, second edition 1887). His most substantial contribution for the Survey was as principal author of *Geology of the Yorkshire Coalfield* (1878, 823 pp).

Green resigned from the Survey in 1874 on his appointment as Professor of Geology (and later of Mathematics) at the newly founded Yorkshire College in Leeds, and while there he continued to undertake some official Survey work. The British Geological Survey has more than fifty of his field notebooks, section books and sketch books, dating from between 1853 and 1895. His careful and meticulous notes are embellished with pencil sketches and watercolours of exceptional artistic merit. Some of these sketches (such as that illustrated here) demonstrate a whimsical sense of humour, an attribute confirmed by one of his contemporaries at the Survey, Edward Greenly.

The following incident related by A. H. Green is fairly typical of that experienced by many a Survey mapping geologist in the 19th century and comes from Greenly's autobiographical *A hand through time* (1938): One day, he [Green] became aware that a farmer was watching him with suspicion. Wherever he went, the farmer went. Presently, the man came up, asked him what he was doing, and went away, but returned and invited him in to tea. "I really must apologize, Sir, for watching you like I did. But you see, it was this way. The constable he come and sez: "Farmer Long, you remember them ricks as was burnt, and how we couldn't never find out who it was 'as done it. Well, there's a chap about here now as I can't make out. He don't go along the road like an honest man: he's always pokin' about into all sorts of holes and corners. And if I were you, Farmer Long, I should keep an eye on that there chap."

The value of Green's notebooks came to prominence in 1973 in consequence of the Lofthouse Colliery disaster near Wakefield, where an inrush of water claimed the lives of seven miners. A Public Inquiry disclosed that the accident could have been avoided had a vital piece of information contained in one of Green's notebooks been consulted prior to the commencement of coal extraction beneath the abandoned Old Low Laithes Colliery. Following the publication of a Parliamentary Report in September 1973, a detailed, geographically index was prepared to register the contents of all Geological Survey field notebooks up to that time.

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A. H. Green, furnished with accoutrements necessary for a Survey Geologist working in the north of England: mapping case, hat and umbrella (undated, from Edward Greenly's 'A hand through time', 1938).

'A. H. Green on Greenstone blocks': self-caricature from one of Green's field notebooks (BGS Archives GSM/GL/Gr/25).