

MEMORIAL OF FREDERICK NOEL ASHCROFT

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Mr. Frederick Noel Ashcroft, one of the notable mineral collectors of his time and a scientific photographer of the first order died suddenly at his home in London on 4 April, 1949. His scientific interests combined with a flair for administration backed by financial acumen enabled him to render outstanding services as Treasurer both to the Geological Society of Great Britain 1929–1947 and to the Mineralogical Society 1924–1942.

Frederick Noel Ashcroft was born at Wavertree, Liverpool, on August 28th, 1878. He entered Rugby School in 1892 and proceeded to Magdalen College, Oxford in 1897 where he took a "first" in Chemistry Honours in 1901. In that year he also studied at Tübingen, Germany, and accompanied Sir Harold Hartley with whom he had worked at Oxford on a collecting trip to the Seiser Alpe, Bozen, Tirol.

Subsequently he carried out research work in organic chemistry at University College, London, and his first scientific publication in 1907 dealt with an attempt to synthesize a double pyrone ring compound. It was not long, however, before he was exhibiting to the Mineralogical Society zeolites from the neighbourhood of Belfast, and in 1914 he presented to the British Museum over 2,000 specimens of these minerals from all over the world and chiefly from the United States of America and Nova Scotia. His four cabinets of Irish zeolites were subsequently bequeathed to the British Museum.

From 1914–1918 opportunities to one so busily engaged in war work were restricted mainly to the English Lake District and to the mines of Derbyshire, West Cumberland and Wales. After the war he also made collecting trips to Wanlockhead and the Leadhills on which he was accompanied by Dr. Campbell Smith, now Keeper of Minerals in the British Museum. It was at this time that he first turned his attention, probably at the suggestion of Dr. L. J. Spencer, to Swiss minerals, and it is with these that Ashcroft's name will always be associated by mineralogists.

His Swiss collection is the finest ever made and comprises 6,625 specimens accompanied by photographs of the sites and meticulously written labels and catalogue entries. It is the most completely documented of any regional collection in the Mineral Department of the British Museum. "Die Mineralien der Schweizeralpen" by P. Niggli, J. Koenigsberger and R. L. Parker, to which Ashcroft contributed sixteen magnificent plates and a wealth of topographical detail, gives the key to his method of collecting minerals. Always he had in mind problems of mineral origin. His success in preserving the entire contents of each "Kluft" and his per-



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severance in recording the mineral associations and their paragenesis will in due course bring their reward.

Ashcroft owed much to the encouragement of Sir Henry Miers in his undergraduate days, and it is natural that his interests should become embracing and his sympathies liberal ones. He became in 1920 one of the first Charter life Fellows of the Mineralogical Society of America and Managing Trustee of the Geologists' Association of Great Britain in 1925. As Treasurer and Trustee he secured the financial foothold of the Mineralogical Society and doubled its assets. He inaugurated a period of prosperity upon which depended the ever increasing size and quality of the Mineralogical Magazine and the Mineralogical Abstracts.

He leaves his wife, a daughter of the late John Conrad im Thurn, a son and two daughters. Fortunately, he was spared the knowledge that his young son, a brilliant mathematician and one of the outstanding men in the British Treasury, was to outlive him only by a few months.

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Further examples of Ashcroft's photographs are to be found in Arthur Holmes' Principles of Physical Geology (1944). Some of his microphotographs are reproduced in W. Campbell Smith, A new meteoric stone from Suwahib, Arabia, *Min. Mag.*, **23**, 43-50, pl. V (1933); L. J. Spencer, Meteoric iron and silica-glass from the meteorite craters of Henbury (Central Australia) and Wabar (Arabia), *Min. Mag.*, **23**, 387-405, pls. XVIII, XIX and XX (1933).