

MEMORIAL OF WILLIAM THOMAS GORDON

W. CAMPBELL SMITH, *British Museum (Natural History), London*

William Thomas Gordon, Professor Emeritus of Geology at King's College in the University of London, died in London on 13th December, 1950.

Much of his research work and nearly all his writings were on palaeontological subjects and particularly palaeobotany, but he had a considerable knowledge of mineralogy and he had made a good private collection, particularly rich in diamonds and precious stones, both cut and in the rough.

Gordon was born in Glasgow, 27th January, 1884, but his parents moved later to Edinburgh and he went to George Heriot's School there and later to the University, where he studied geology under James Geikie. He remained at Edinburgh as a research scholar after his graduation. Later he went to Cambridge as a research student for two years returning in 1912 again to Edinburgh as Lecturer in Palaeontology and Assistant in the Geology Department.

Just before World War I, Gordon was appointed Lecturer in Geology at King's College, London. The department at King's College was small and Gordon was the only teacher in it in 1914. After the war, he was made a University Reader in 1919 and Professor in 1920. By his energy and enthusiasm he soon built up a sound department and attracted many students to his courses. Soon after taking up his work in London, Gordon began to take an active interest in diamonds and other gem stones, influenced partly no doubt by the proximity of the main centre of diamond and gem stone trading in Hatton Garden to his own College in the Strand. He did much to assist the trade in the testing of rare stones.

He was a keen collector in the field himself and during his Edinburgh days, before he went to Cambridge, he had visited many of the Scottish mineral localities and by vigorous trenching of old dumps he had found many fine specimens.

On field excursions he was a delightful companion and to many visitors to London he was a cheerful and hospitable host. Many kindly and generous things were done by him to help others.

Outstanding among Gordon's numerous activities in London University was his devotion to the students and their social life. He played a large part in this side of the work of King's College. He was Senior Treasurer of the University Union, Warden of the College Hall of Residence, and President of the Old Students' Association.



WILLIAM THOMAS GORDON
1884-1950

His travels abroad were taken either to attend meetings of the International Geological Congress or of the British Association, or to take part in geological excursions with his students or the Geologists' Association.

He was President of the Geology Section of the British Association in 1934, a secretary of the Geological Society of London (1929–1937), Vice-President (1937–1939). He was a member of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain (1923–1950), and of the Mineralogical Society of America (1927–1938) and a Fellow from 1938.

His mineralogical papers are very few and are mentioned below. An account of his geological and palaeontological work has already appeared in the obituary notice in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London* (1951, **106**, Proceedings p. lx).

MINERALOGICAL PAPERS BY W. T. GORDON

- (1922), Discovery of gold in Devon: *Nature*, **109**, 583.
(1926), Preparation of thin rock sections: *Rept. Brit. Assoc. Oxford*, 348–349.
(1933), Gem Stones: *Proc. Roy. Inst. Great Britain*, **27**, 892–902; *Nature*, **132**, 267–269.
(1933), Discussion on the origin of red sedimentary rocks: *Rept. Brit. Assoc.*, Leicester, 482.
(1934), William Hyde Wollaston, F. R. S. (1766–1828), Unveiling of memorial plaque: *Nature*, **134**, 86–87.
(1943), The chemistry of gemstones: *Endeavour*, **2**, 99–104.
(1945), A note on some large diamonds recently recovered from the gravels of the Woyie river, Sierra Leone: *Bull. Imp. Inst.*, **43**, 111–120.

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