

DAVIES, WILLIAM (1814 - 1891), palaeontologist

Name: William Davies
Date of birth: 1814
Date of death: 1891
Child: Thomas Davies
Parent: Thomas Davies
Gender: Male
Occupation: palaeontologist
Area of activity: Nature and Agriculture; Science and Mathematics
Author: Frederick John North

Born 13 July 1814 at Holywell, Flintshire, son of Thomas Davies. He joined the staff of the British Museum in 1843, and after working on the mineral collection turned his attention to fossil fishes and then to vertebrate fossils generally; he became so well acquainted with the latter and so skilful in reconstructing extinct forms of life that he eventually took charge of the entire vertebrate fossil collection (1875), with rank equivalent to that of an assistant keeper at the present time.

In 1880 he assisted in the removal of the natural history collections from Bloomsbury to South Kensington. The museum owes some of its most important specimens (e.g. the great head of the Ilford mammoth) to his skill in the disinterment of such remains and their reconstruction from apparently worthless fragments. His position brought him into constant touch with the greatest of the pioneers in vertebrate palaeontology, but, being of a retiring disposition and more interested in his official duties than in publishing the results of his work, he remained less well-known outside the Museum than his service to science merits.

He published fifteen short but important contributions in the *Geological Magazine* and the *Quarterly Jnl. of the Geological Society*, including a note, 1886, on the animal remains found in the Ffynnon Beuno and Cae Gwyn caves in North Wales and a catalogue, 1874, of the vertebrate fossils found in the brick-fields near Ilford. His indirect contributions to published works are indicated by the references to help given by him in the publication of the British Museum catalogues of fossil fishes, reptiles, and mammals, and in the account of the carboniferous fossils of Belgium by L. G. de Koninck.

In 1873 Davies received the first award of the Murchison medal founded by the Geological Society, and four years later was elected a Life Fellow of the Society. He continued to serve the museum by revising proofs of palaeontological publications after his retirement in 1887. He died at Collier's End, Hertford, 13 February, 1891. His son, [Thomas Davies](#), mineralogist, is separately noticed.

Author

Frederick John North, (1889 - 1968)

Sources

The Geological Magazine, 1891, 144, 190-2, with list of publications

Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London, XI, vii, 1891, 56

[*Notable Welshmen (1700–1900)* (1908)]

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Davies](#)

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