

## DAWKINS, Sir WILLIAM BOYD (1837 - 1929), geologist and antiquary

**Name:** William Boyd Dawkins

**Date of birth:** 1837

**Date of death:** 1929

**Spouse:** Mary Dawkins (née Poole)

**Spouse:** Frances Dawkins (née Speke Evans)

**Parent:** Richard Dawkins

**Gender:** Male

**Occupation:** geologist and antiquary

**Area of activity:** History and Culture; Nature and Agriculture; Scholarship and Languages; Science and Mathematics

**Author:** Frederick John North

Born at Buttington, near Welshpool, 26 December 1837, the son of Richard Dawkins, vicar of Buttington. He was educated at Rossall School and Jesus College, Oxford [where he reached class II in classical moderations (1859) and class I in natural science (1860)]. He became an officer of the Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1861-9, curator of the Manchester Museum, 1869, professor of geology at Owens College, Manchester, 1874-1909. He was elected F.R.S. in 1867, and honorary Fellow of Jesus College in 1882; he was awarded the Lyell medal of the Geological Society, 1889, and the Prestwich medal, 1918, and was knighted, 1919. He married (1886) Frances, daughter of Robert Speke Evans, and (1922) Mary Poole. He died at Bowden, Ches., 15 January 1929.

Dawkins was a pioneer in the study of problems relating to the antiquity of man and the possible occurrence of human implements associated with the remains of extinct animals in Europe. He began in 1866 the publication of a monograph dealing with the British Pleistocene mammals. He examined deposits on the floor of Wookey Cave in Somerset (1857-61), and showed that the cave had been occupied during Pleistocene times sometimes by hyenas and sometimes by man. He took part (with J. Magens Mello) in excavating a cave in Cresswell Crags near Worksop and again demonstrated the contemporaneity of man with animals now extinct, and discovered a piece of bone with an incised representation of the head of a horse - the first example of the art of cave-man to be found in Britain. His work in this field was summarized in *Cave Hunting*, 1874, and *Early Man in Britain and his place in the Tertiary Period*, 1880.

As geological adviser to the Channel Tunnel Company in 1882 he suggested extending a boring made near Dover, in the belief that it would establish the existence of the coalfield supposed to occur beneath south-eastern England. Coal seams were reached at depths between 1,100 and 1,700 feet, and the discovery resulted in the development of the Kent coalfield.

### Author

Frederick John North, (1889 - 1968)

### Sources

*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

*Proceedings of the Geological Society [of London]* (1836-46), 1929

### Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [William Boyd Dawkins](#)

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