

a few pioneers, its final establishment was the work of William Smith (1769-1839)—usually known as the “Father of English geology.” He definitely arranged the rocks in their true order from the Killas series (Cambrian and Silurian) of Wales up to the Tertiary groups of the London basin. More particularly he determined the subdivisions of the Secondary, or at least of the Jurassic (Oolitic) rocks, and established their order, which has been found applicable not only to England but to the rest of Europe. No more interesting chapter in scientific annals can be found than that which traces the progress of this remarkable man, who, amidst endless obstacles and hindrances, clung to the idea which had early taken shape in his mind, and who lived to see that idea universally accepted as the guiding principle in the investigation of the geological structure, not of England only, but of Europe and of the globe.

William Smith came of a race of yeoman farmers who for many generations had owned small tracts of land in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.¹ He was born at Churchill, in the former county, on 23rd March 1769, the same year that gave birth to Cuvier. Before he was eight years old he lost his father. After his mother married for the second time, he seems to have been largely dependent upon an uncle

¹The biographical details are derived from the *Memoirs of William Smith, LL.D.*, by his nephew and pupil, John Phillips, 1844. The biographer (1800-1874) became himself a leading geologist in England and for the last eighteen years of his active and useful life was the genial Reader and Professor of Geology in the University of Oxford.