

*Observations on Fossil Vegetables* (1831), to which Nicol supplied the first published account of his process.

Here then geologists were provided with a method of investigating the minutest structures of rocks and minerals. As it was now made possible to subject any part of the earth's crust to investigation with the microscope, it might have been thought that those who devoted themselves to the study of that crust, especially those who were more particularly interested in the structure, composition and history of rocks, would have hastened to avail themselves of the new facilities for research thus offered to them.

It must be confessed, I am afraid, that geologists are about as difficult to move as their own erratic blocks. They took no notice of the possibilities put in their way by William Nicol. And so for a quarter of a century the matter went to sleep. When Nicol died, his instruments and preparations passed into the hands of the late Mr. Alexander Bryson of Edinburgh who, having considerable dexterity as a manipulator, and being much interested in the process, made many additions to the collections which he had acquired. In particular, he made numerous thin slices of minerals and rocks for the purpose of exhibiting the cavities containing fluid, which had been described long before by Brewster<sup>1</sup> and by William Nicol.<sup>2</sup> In my boyhood I had frequent opportunities of seeing these and the other specimens in Mr. Bryson's cabinet, as well as the fine series of fossil woods sliced so long before by Nicol.

<sup>1</sup> *Trans. Roy. Soc. Edin.* vol. x. (1824), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Edin. New. Phil. Jour.* vol. v. (1828), p. 94.