

Society the names of those old masters who laid the foundations of the science in Britain, on the territory marked out by the small but enthusiastic band of pioneers.

Geology then demanded more pecuniary aid for its study than now, and the members of the Society consisted of men of independent means, such as Greenough, De la Beche, Lyell, and Murchison; of ministers in the Church of England, such as Conybeare, Buckland, and Sedgwick; of medical men like Fitton, Wollaston, and Mantell; or of men in substantial mercantile positions like Horner and William Phillips. Lonsdale, who, like De la Beche and Murchison, had been trained to the military profession, was in less easy circumstances, and, fortunately for the Society, he served for many years in the Museum and Library in succession to Thomas Webster. John Phillips (nephew of William Smith), who commenced early in his career as a lecturer, became one of the most famous of professors.

It is not a little astonishing to find what a sound grasp of geological structure was attained in early years by these old masters; and it may be of interest, therefore, to quote from a recently published autobiography of Conybeare—to whom both Buckland and Sedgwick expressed indebtedness for original instruction—some passages that throw light on the progress of geological study.

There is no need to dwell upon the fact that W. D. Conybeare before the age of twelve 'had written a novel, a play, and sundry poems—the only copies of which, preserved by an old uncle, luckily fell into my hands when I was sixteen,' and were committed to the flames. His father, then rector of St. Botolph, Bishopsgate, had a small country house in the village of Bexley; and there William Conybeare became interested in the Chalk, which had been reached in many places by shafts sunk 60 or 70 feet through newer strata (now known as Eocene) that yielded many fossil shells. At Oxford his 'great text-book' was Stukeley's 'Itinerarium Curiosum' (2nd ed. 1776), from