

the daughter of a Wiltshire squire, who resided for many years at Norton House, near Warminster. There she formed a collection of local fossils, especially those of the Upper Greensand and Chalk. In the possession of the Society is a MS. quarto volume by Miss Benett, dated 1816, and entitled 'Sketches of Fossil Alcyonia from the Greensand Formation at Warminster Common, and in the immediate vicinity of Warminster, in Wiltshire.' She contributed to Sir Richard Colt Hoare's County History 'A Catalogue of the Organic Remains of the County of Wilts,' which was reprinted and privately issued in 1831. In that work she described and figured several species of Upper Greensand sponges. Among the specimens in her collection was one regarded by members of the family as Aunt Etheldred's heart; but that this had not suffered petrification may be inferred from her reply to a request for a silhouette. She wrote from Norton House, May 15, 1837, enclosing a profile of herself taken a short time previously at Bath, and remarked:

'Such as he has made me in bonnet, cap, and velvet spencer, you have me; or rather, I should say, you have me not, for I do not think it will give you the least idea of me. The dress I am never seen in but in my pony carriage, and it makes me look at least ten years older than I am; I could not alter my dress when I found the man, for I had not a moment to spare.'<sup>1</sup>

The value of fossils, as William Smith taught, was in the identification of geological formations; and for many years geologists collected specimens from the main stratigraphical divisions, with little or no regard to the particular layers in which they occurred.

William Crawford Williamson (1816-95), in later years so well known for his researches among fossil plants, was one of the first to draw attention to the fact that the fossils characteristic of a formation were not distributed indiscriminately in it. He was son of John Williamson,

<sup>1</sup> Letter to S. Woodward, of Norwich, now in the possession of Dr. Henry Woodward.