

shorten many of the papers before reading them before the Society, or rather to know what parts to skip. Again, my ignorance of all languages, and not knowing how to pronounce even a *single* word of French—a language so perpetually quoted. It would be disgraceful to the Society to have a secretary who could not read French. Secondly, the loss of time. . . . I cannot look forward, with even tolerable comfort, to undertaking an office without entering on it heart and soul.’¹

Ultimately, to the honour of the Society, Darwin accepted, and held office during the years 1838–41.

For many years it was customary for one of the secretaries to read the papers, or selected portions of them, at the evening meetings of the Society; although exceptions were occasionally made on request of an author who desired personally to state the main points of his paper. The practice of calling upon an author, whenever present, to read his paper, or to discourse generally on his subject, was not adopted until the Society had settled at Burlington House.

In 1837, thirty years after the foundation of the Society, the officers and council were as follows:—

The Rev. William Whewell was *president*, with Buckland, Fitton, Greenough, and Murchison as *vice-presidents*; Robert Hutton and J. F. Royle, *secretaries*; De la Beche, *foreign secretary*; John Taylor, *treasurer*; and F. Baily, Broderip, W. Clift, Viscount Cole, Darwin, Daubeny, Egerton, H. Hallam, L. Horner, Lyell, Marquis of Northampton, Sir Woodbine Parish, Sedgwick, and Warburton, other members of *Council*.

Whewell (1794–1862) was a man of encyclopædic knowledge, whose career at Cambridge was most distinguished. He held for five years the professorship of Mineralogy, and was in 1841 appointed Master of Trinity College. He became President of the Geological Society at the urgent request of Sedgwick, Lyell, and Murchison.

¹ ‘Life and Letters of Charles Darwin,’ vol. i. 1887, p. 285.