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OBITUARY

R. H. Rastall, 1871-1950

ROBERT HERON RASTALL, M.A., Sc.D., M.Inst.M.M., Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, died at his home near Whitby on 3rd February, 1950, aged 78. His name first appears as Editor of the *Geological Magazine* on the title page of the 1919 volume, and he overlapped with Dr. Woodward for three years; his death severs the last direct connection with the original editorship of this journal.

Born near Whitby in November, 1871, he was the elder son of the late Mr. H. A. H. Rastall, J.P., of Turnerdale Hall, Ruswarp, and he claimed to be descended from John Rastell, nephew of Sir Thomas More. He was educated privately, and later studied agriculture with the object of the better managing the family estates around Grosmont and Ruswarp in Eskdale. For a time he taught at Tamworth Agricultural College; but geology had fascinated him as a boy (when, as he recalled, "Martin Simpson was a familiar figure of every day life and in nearly every Whitby home there were 'snakestones'"), and to geology at Cambridge he later returned. During the course of his professional career, his interests ranged over a remarkably wide field, but appropriately his first and his last papers were concerned with the geology of his native county.

His decision to devote himself to geology was taken relatively late in life, and he was nearly thirty years old when in 1899 he came to Cambridge to obtain a double first in the Natural Sciences Tripos (Part I in 1902, and Part II, Geology, in 1903). His Supervisor recalls him as one of the earliest undergraduate car owners, and motoring remained one of his pleasures to the last. In 1903 he was awarded the Harkness Scholarship, and in his early post-graduate period in company with others of his science year he engaged in part-time tutorial work at one of the London Civil Service coaching establishments. In 1906 he was elected to a Fellowship at Christ's College, which he held till 1913; he continued to reside in College, and was re-elected to a Supernumerary Fellowship in 1926. From 1905 to 1949 a steady stream of geological papers and books flowed from his pen, and till his retirement to Yorkshire in 1942, his association with Cambridge was only interrupted by the first World War, when his remarkable knowledge of languages was such that he rendered valuable

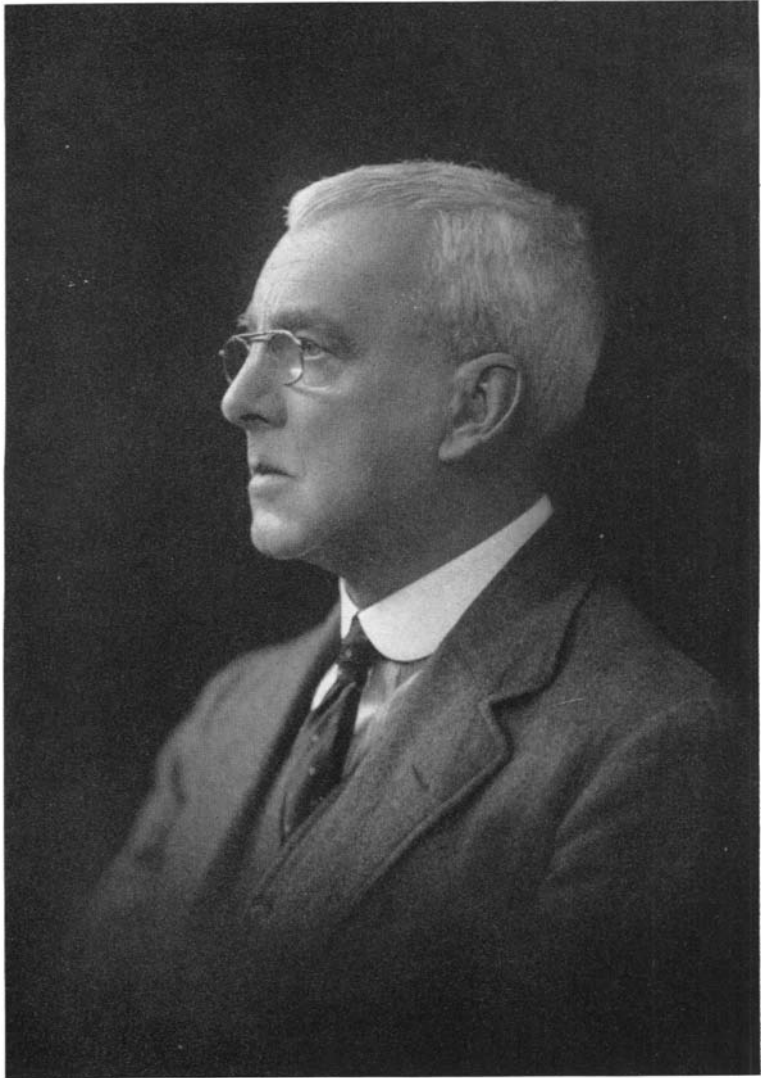


Photo J. Palmer Clarke (Ramsey & Muspratt), Cambridge.

RH Rastall

confidential service from 1915 to 1919 in the Censorship (at that time under the War Office). His ability was recognized at the University by his appointment, first as Demonstrator in Geology (in 1910) and later as Lecturer in Economic Geology (1919). He was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall in 1926, and the Lyell Medal of the Geological Society of London twenty years later.

Rastall's original geological work was so varied as to be difficult to summarize. In the field of igneous petrology and metamorphism his "Skiddaw Granite" (*Quart. Journ. Geol. Soc.*, 1910) is perhaps the best-known of several papers. As a sedimentary petrologist, he was one of the pioneers in directing attention to the significance of accessory minerals in sediments; more recently, his name is particularly associated with petrographic investigation of the sedimentary iron ores of the Jurassic. His papers on the tectonics and underground structure of southern and eastern England were admirable summaries and the best interpretations of knowledge in this field up to the recent phase of regional geophysical exploration. In stratigraphy, he was the first to present plausible evidence for the Pre-Cambrian age of the Ingletonian, and he has made notable contributions to our knowledge of the Middle Jurassic rocks of Yorkshire. In the economic field his main work was concerned with the genesis of tin and tungsten ores. It is, however, probably through his numerous textbooks that his influence has been most widely felt. Generations of students, far beyond the limits of the Cambridge School, have been introduced to geology through "Lake and Rastall", now in its fifth edition, and almost a household word. Hatch and Rastall's *Petrology of Sedimentary Rocks* ran rapidly through two editions, and was again revised shortly before the last war by Dr. Black. His *Agricultural Geology* combined his early interests with his later experience in a standard work of its day; and his *Geology of Metalliferous Deposits* and *Physico-Chemical Geology*, though never so popular as the others, were stimulating propaganda at a time when in this country economic geology was receiving but scant attention. Between 1906 and 1913 he travelled on the Continent, visiting type petrological localities; in 1910 he visited South Africa; and in 1927 he went at the invitation of the Federated Malay States Government to arbitrate in a dispute concerning the structure of the Kinta Tin Field.

Rastall's services to the *Geological Magazine* covered a period of more than thirty years. He had begun to assist Dr. Woodward in 1916, and in 1919 he assumed joint editorship, taking over full responsibility on Woodward's death in 1921. About this time the *Magazine* had been passing through one of its recurrent crises, and had in 1918 narrowly escaped extinction. The enthusiasm which Rastall brought

to it in the early post-war years, with the financial support of many generous subscribers, and from time to time as occasion required of the Editor himself, carried it safely past the critical period; marked by the advent of "whole series" numbers and the disappearance of the tiresome "decades", the *Magazine* emerged under Rastall's charge to a further phase of useful existence. For a while, he had to contend with a difficulty almost incredible to-day—shortage of copy—and upon the Editor devolved the duty of hack-writing to fill the standard number of pages. Many notes and reviews in those early years had no other object than this, but in all he wrote fluently and with clarity. He strove to introduce consistency and improve the general standard of presentation of papers, and finally published his advice in an article "On the Preparation of Geological Manuscripts" (*Geol. Mag.*, 1933). His own wide interests in geology, his good sense, and his broad-mindedness made him an ideal editor; even his distaste for palaeontology was a tolerant aversion, and he granted "The language of palaeontology is a jargon, but at any rate it is a consistent jargon". To the last, he upheld the duty of the *Geological Magazine* to afford publicity to unorthodox views, a traditional ideal which he inherited from his predecessor and instilled into his successor.

Rastall belonged to that once prevalent class of bachelor don whose College was his home; and his conservative nature did not easily adapt itself to the changing social conditions that followed the first war, and were accelerated by the second. He had a reserved manner to which shyness and increasing deafness both contributed, but he hid beneath a cool and at times almost frigid exterior a warm-hearted and affectionate nature known to but few. In congenial company, he revealed himself a gifted conversationalist, admired and appreciated by such exacting critics as A. E. Housman and Ernest Harrison. Slow and deliberate in speech, his everyday conversation was characterized by a caustic humour, as when he solemnly warned his successor, "An author never corrects his proofs; he merely alters them," or explained the basis of Geological Society awards: "When you have filled in a sufficient number of six-inch maps of Wales, they give you a medal." Truly he did receive the Lyell Medal in 1946 without this preliminary accomplishment, but success was more of a stranger to him than disappointment, and even his life at Cambridge was not unclouded by misunderstandings.

As an undergraduate, he became converted to the Roman Catholic faith, and from then onwards he was zealously associated with Catholic activities in the University. He was President of the Cambridge University Catholic Association when that body established Fisher House as the chaplaincy to the Catholic undergraduates in 1924, and for nearly twenty years after, so that recent generations of Catholic

students who thus came into contact with him socially will perhaps recall him more vividly than the geological students, for he gave up active teaching in 1934.

The last few years of his life were passed in lonely retirement on his family estate in Eskdale, after ill-health and the strain of the war years made it advisable for him to leave Cambridge. His aloof but courtly figure had already ceased to be familiar, but will long be remembered with affection by his friends and colleagues.

(In the compilation of this note, I have enjoyed the help of many who knew or worked with Dr. Rastall ; in particular I should like to thank the Rev. A. N. Gilbey, of Fisher House, Dr. W. L. Edge, and Professor W. G. Fearnside, F.R.S.—O. M. B. B.)