

## W.A.E. USSHER: AN INSIGHT INTO HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER

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The Ussher Society is named after W.A.E. Ussher, the eminent geologist who spent a large proportion of his working life in South-West England. William Augustus Edmond Ussher was the youngest of six children born to John and Mary Ussher of Eastwell House, Loughra, County Galway. He joined the Geological Survey at the age of nineteen in 1868 and went on to become a well respected field mapping geologist, retiring in 1909. The ancestry of the Ussher family in Ireland has been documented by House (1978), tracing roots back as far as Archbishop James Ussher who famously stated the date of creation as 4004 BC. Dineley in 1974 wrote about the work of W.A.E. Ussher in South-West England; however, little to date has been written about the life of the man after whom the society takes its name. Using letters from the archives of the British Geological Survey, amongst other sources, ongoing research shows an insight into his life and character.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Ussher Society was formed in 1962 to act as a focus for geological work in South-West England, a region which has played a key role in the history of British geology (Mather, 2011). It was named after the survey geologist William Augustus Edmond Ussher (1849-1920), an officer of the Geological Survey of Great Britain, who spent much of his working life in South-West England and made a major contribution to establishing the stratigraphical succession in the Devonian, Carboniferous and Permo-Triassic rocks of Devon and Cornwall (Dineley, 1974).

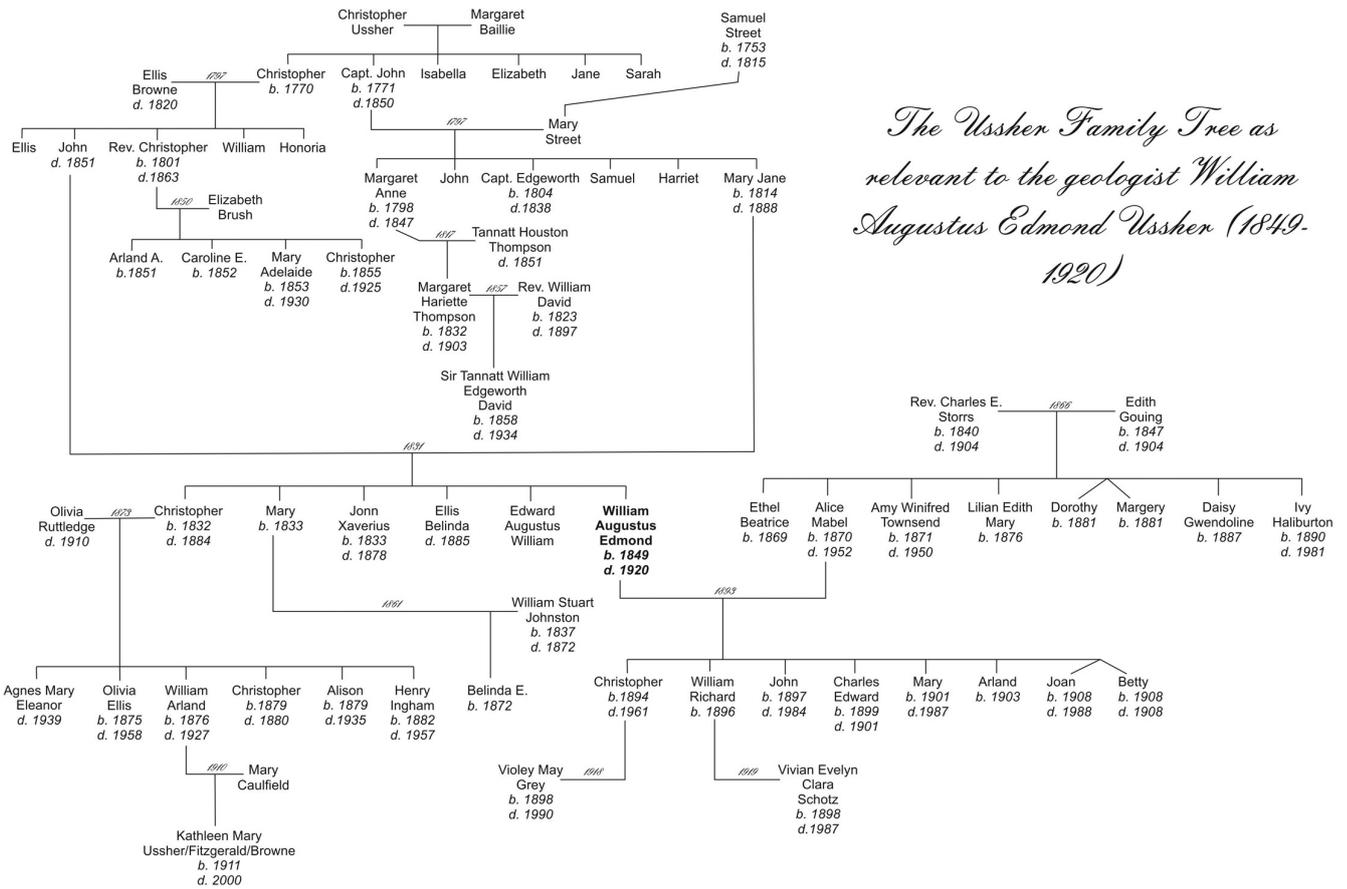
The Usshers were an Irish Protestant landowning family, with recorded ancestry dating back to the 15th Century. House (1978) traced the family back to James Ussher (1581-1656), the Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, who, in his work of 1654, "*Annalium pars posterior*", dated the creation of the Earth as 4004 BC. It wasn't until the late 18th Century that Christopher Ussher (II), the paternal grandfather of W.A.E. Ussher (Figure 1), established his family at Eastwell House, Loughrea, County Galway. On his death the house passed to his eldest son, John, whilst a younger brother, Christopher (III), entered the church. The latter married Elizabeth Brush in 1850, before moving to a living in Kensington, London sometime between the birth of their youngest child in 1855 and the 1861 census. Meanwhile John Ussher, the younger brother of Christopher (II), had become a soldier, serving in His Majesty's Fifth Regiment of Foot. Posted to Canada in 1797 he married Mary Street, the daughter of Samuel Street, a judge and eminent political figure with whom he had six children (Figure 1). In 1831, aged only 16, the youngest of these children, Mary Jane, married her first cousin, John, the heir of Eastwell House. Six children were born to the couple between 1832 and 1849, the youngest being William Augustus Edmond Ussher, who was born only two years before the death of his father, leaving his mother a widow at the age of 35 years.

The object of this paper is to trace the life of W.A.E. Ussher from its beginnings in County Galway to prominence as a valued officer of the Geological Survey. Although his work has been well documented (Dineley, 1974), little is known about his personal life or his relationships with his peers. Published and unpublished sources, in particular the letters to his colleagues held in the British Geological Survey archives, are used to give an insight into his life and character and to provide a background against which, his geological work can be assessed.

### THE EARLY YEARS

Research has found little so far about Ussher's early years. He may have been educated at school or by private tutor. Two Usshers, Christopher and John Xaverius, appear on the register of the Royal School of Armagh (Emerald Ancestors, 2013). These may be his brothers; however, there is no record of his attendance there. It is not known by which route he came to join the Geological Survey, although he would have taken the Civil Service entry examination. In the early days of the survey it was likely that appointments were made through contacts within the family and it may have been through his uncle, the Reverend Christopher Ussher (III), who had obtained a living at St Mary's Church in Westminster, near to the Geological Survey offices at the Museum of Practical Geology in Jermyn Street, that the contact was made.

Ussher joined the survey in 1868 at the age of 19 as an assistant geologist under the director Sir Roderick Impey Murchison. Murchison was responsible for the rapid expansion of the field survey staff (Flett, 1937) and he took on 19 assistant geologists in 1867 followed by another 14 the following year. At that time it was customary for the officers of the survey to have their portraits taken for the records and Figure 2 shows



**Figure 1.** Family tree showing some of the main branches of the Ussher family as mentioned in the text. Information sourced from registered Births, Marriages and Deaths and census records as well as biographical accounts found during internet searches. The information is not guaranteed to be entirely accurate, but has been checked against different sources where available.



**Figure 2.** Portrait of William Augustus Edmond Ussher. Probably taken around the time of his entry into the Geological Survey in 1868. *British Geological Survey, P575827.*

Ussher, probably around that time. Ussher joined the survey the year after Horace Bolingbroke Woodward and Figure 3, posed in a studio in Glastonbury, shows the two assistant geologists, suggesting that they not only worked together, but were also friends.

One of the first mapping assignments that Ussher worked on was the Wellington sheet, of which he mapped the main part on the one-inch scale between 1870 and 1875, with assistance from H.B. Woodward and Clement Reid on the southern part. Training at that time took the form of learning on the job, with some help from more experienced geologists. Despite his inexperience his geological map (Geological Survey, 1906) stood as a testament to his thoroughness and ability, until superseded with the recent publication of the updated Wellington sheet in 2009 (British Geological Survey, 2009). The Wellington mapping took place between 1870 and 1875. The census of 1871 shows Ussher to be resident in lodgings in St James, Taunton, together with his younger cousin Arland A. Ussher, the eldest son of the Reverend Christopher Ussher (III), showing the link between the families to remain strong. Although it is not known why the cousins were living together at this time Arland A. Ussher went on to become a watercolourist, painting many scenes of South-West England and Ireland. It is possible that he accompanied Ussher in the field, sketching landscapes as his cousin carried out his mapping work.

By 1876 it appears that Ussher was starting to get involved in geology in other areas of the south-west publishing papers on the gravels of the River Dart (Ussher, 1876) followed by the pebbles at Budleigh (Ussher, 1877a) and the Watcombe Clay (Ussher, 1877b) in the *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*. Other notable people publishing geological papers in the *Transactions* at this time included the Sidmouth based polymath, Peter Orlando Hutchinson (Mather and Symes,



**Figure 3.** W.A.E. Ussher (seated) and H.B. Woodward. Photograph taken in Glastonbury in 1868. *British Geological Survey, P575831.*

2006) and William Pengelly, the geologist and archaeologist famous for his excavations of Kents Cavern. Interestingly it was partly this work, conducted by Pengelly and others, that contributed to the growing realisation that the biblical age of the Earth, as calculated by the Archbishop Ussher many years before, was incorrect.

In the archives of the British Geological Survey are a number of letters written by, and to, W.A.E. Ussher, the earliest of which is dated 1877 and written to William Whittaker, a geologist of the survey several years his senior. Written in an ebullient style Ussher writes “*I hope you are flourishing like a green bay tree and that Mrs W and family are enjoying superlative salubrity to which I append best wishes*”. He says he is currently “*engaged on a draft memoir of Devon and Somerset*” and that “*after a little preliminary grumbling and a visit to me in my corner of England I have no doubt you will at least admit the possibility if not the probability of my ideas*”.

Ussher also kept in touch with his old friend H.B. Woodward as a letter the same year from Woodward at the office at 28 Jermyn Street in London shows. He writes “*My dear Ussher. The influence of the dinner has somewhat curtailed my opportunities of replying to your various epistles, not that I have felt any the worse for it, but when 2 or 3 are gathered together in the office it is, as you know, somewhat difficult to concentrate one’s attention. Having at the moment a whole room to myself and having just been stimulated by a glass of stout which Mr Larry brought in I placed myself to business*”. He goes on to

describe the “*Jolly dinner on Saturday*” with “*Songs from Prof Ramsey, Best, Tiddeman, Sketchly, Rutley and Pugh*” a list of well respected geologists, and ends by saying that it was “*unanimously voted that we have an annual dinner in future*”.

Ussher was still engaged with his memoir for Devon and Somerset as, in another letter, Woodward writes concerning the clay with flints “*I must confess I cannot see how it was formed by dissolution of the Chalk*” and also that “*your hypothesis of land ice is certainly very ingenious and original*”, but there is “*not sufficient evidence to make it wash*”. As Dineley (1974) remarked, Ussher was never afraid to put forward a provisional working hypothesis and many of the archived letters relate to his latest ideas. Woodward finishes his letter with “*this office had just been put into a muddle by the incoming of a giant case with drawers for our private use so that I will shut up reserving some remarks on your former letter for another and briefer note which I hope to write tomorrow. Kind regards to your mother*”. By this time, while Ussher remained working in the field as an assistant geologist, Woodward was in the office working to further his career. Having been rapidly promoted to the position of geologist two years previously Woodward went on to climb through the ranks, ending his career as assistant to the director. Ussher was to remain as an assistant geologist for 24 years before he was promoted. This was not through any fault, but due to promotions being blocked by Geikie, who had taken over as director in 1882 (Wilson, 1985).

By 1881 W.A.E. Ussher was registered in the census as living at 101 Abingdon Road, Kensington with his mother, elder sister Mary Johnston and her daughter Belinda, aged nine. Mary had married a doctor, William Stuart Johnston, and Belinda was registered as being born in Paubasse in the Pyrenees (France). Mary is listed as a widow so it is likely that she came back to live with her mother and brother after the death of her husband. Although the Ussher family is large, it appears that they were close-knit and kept in touch, helping out each other in time of need.

During the early 1880s there is little evidence of Ussher’s movements as there are no letters in the archives. However, publications from this period range around the south-west from north Devon and west Somerset through to south Devon and Cornwall (see publication list in Dineley, 1974). In 1886 he started mapping in Gloucestershire and this was the start of a period where, for about six years, he moved away from working in the south-west. He was sent to map in other areas of England including Lincoln, 1888, North Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire, 1890 and Sussex, 1890 and 1891 (Field maps in BGS Archives). The picture of Ussher shown in Figure 4 was taken by Frank Meadows Sutcliffe of Whitby and it seems probable that it was taken about 1890 when he was working in the Yorkshire area. At this time Ussher would have been around 40 years old.

Although he was not mapping in the south-west it appears that his main base was still there, living with his mother at Rookfields, their house in Cary Crescent, Torquay. It was here that his mother died on 12 December 1888 at the age of 74. It was also from here that he wrote letters to his old friend Woodward and the petrographers back at the London office, F.H. Hatch and J.J.H. Teall.

Frederick Henry Hatch was appointed as a Temporary Assistant Geologist (petrologist for England and Wales) in 1886 and worked for a time under the supervision of Jethro Justinian Harris Teall, the official Chief Petrographer. Working for the survey for only a short period between 1886 and 1892, Hatch emigrated to South Africa and was influential in the geological exploration taking place in the Transvaal and the goldfields (Howarth, 2012). Hatch and Ussher seem to have enjoyed a good relationship as well as the usual work-related topics. In correspondence of 1890, Ussher complains about the work instructions from the then director of the survey, Sir Archibald Geikie. “*Geikie has given instructions that I can’t carry out in an impossible time and I have been working up til 7 or 8 and for an hour after dinner to try to finish by the end of April*”. The next month he must have visited the office for his letter reads



**Figure 4.** Portrait of W.A.E. Ussher taken by Frank Sutcliffe of Whitby. British Geological Survey, P575830.

*“Now Freddy me Bboy, you were too lazy to wish me goodbye, ab well! There’s no animus, but I cut and we only managed to get the train by an undignified run. How much do I owe you for these pleasant little games and also for the Pot o Beer so noble won. It was not shabbiness that made me repudiate all monetary obligations. Simply I was cut fine and didn’t know what hotel bill might be. I got home just 1/3 to the good so you see I had my reasons laddie. I only got my maps yesterday. There is a fine field for you in the new ground if you come down. Wisbin you evey happiness adieu my infant. Yr Dev. WAE U.”*

Ussher did not work in isolation, but seems rather to have engaged with local enthusiasts as well as more prominent members of the scientific community. A letter from June 1889 to Woodward described the “discussions with Mr Champernowne on the Saltern Cove railway cutting fossils”. Mr Arthur Champernowne was a palaeontologist and member of the Torquay Natural History Society, who had worked zealously on fossils in the Devonian strata of the area. Later in 1890 in a letter to Hatch he described “the Champernowne map” (of the Torquay area) as an “excellent one and super excellent for an amateur”. The director obviously agreed, as when the map was made available to the Geological Survey Ussher was employed to merely check the linework. However, Ussher actually carried out a full six-inch scale survey for the Torquay district; work that he continued throughout the rest of his career.

By 1891 Ussher was back working in South-West England as in the census of that year he is registered as a lodger with William Saale, a retired builder at 28 Village, Stoke Fleming, when he must have been mapping around the South Hams. However, a letter written from Tremlett House, Stoke Fleming to Teall in 1891 confirms that his main residence was still Rookfields: “I am going to Torquay, Rookfields tomorrow, on Monday office work and on Tuesday I hope to get Somervaile to show me his evidence near South Pool”. Alexander Somervaile was the successor to William Pengelly as Honorary Secretary of the Torquay Natural History Society.

In addition to the Devonshire Association and the Torquay Natural History Society, Ussher was also involved with members of the Geologists’ Association and led field excursions as well as attending others. In the volume “*Geology in the Field*” (Monckton and Herries, 1910), published as a jubilee volume of the Geologists’ Association, Ussher (1910) wrote the section on the geology of Cornwall, Devon and West Somerset and in the introduction he lists and comments on the excursions held by the society in the south-west between the years 1884 and 1907, indicating he was well acquainted with them.

### MARRIAGE AND THE STORRS FAMILY

Promoted from being an assistant to the position of geologist in 1892 gave Ussher more freedom and financial stability, and in 1893 he married Alice Mabel Storrs, a girl 20 years his junior. Alice Mabel was the second daughter of the Reverend Charles Storrs and his wife Edith, who at the time of the marriage were residing in Ellacombe, Torquay. Although there is no direct record linking Ussher to the Storrs family it is to be presumed that they met through mutual acquaintances.

According to the report in the *Western Times* (Exeter) of 28 July 1893, the bride wore a dress of surah silk, trimmed with Flanders lace and a veil of Honiton lace. Her bouquet was a gift of the bridegroom and he also gave her a pearl brooch and a gold bracelet. Five of her younger sisters acted as bridesmaids and she also had four of Ussher’s nieces, including Miss Johnston (Belinda). Mr Arland Ussher (cousin) acted as best man. The reception was held at the Vicarage and the married couple left that night for London en-route to Ireland.

Originating from Doncaster Charles Edward Storrs, a clerk in Holy Orders, married Edith Gouing, the daughter of a brewer, from Headingly, in 1866. After the marriage they travelled out to Amritsar, in north-west India, where both their eldest daughter Edith Beatrice and Alice Mabel were born. Returning to England before the birth of their third daughter in 1871 Charles Storrs became curate of the Holy Trinity in Heworth Green, Yorkshire. By 1881 Charles had become the Vicar of Snaith and had fathered three more daughters, including twins. The census of this year shows three girls of the name of Smith as boarders, possibly being tutored by Charles to supplement his income. In 1887 the Storrs family added a seventh daughter, to the family; registered as being born in Bristol, during the short period of two and a half years that the Reverend Storrs was vicar at St Pauls, Bedminster. In April 1888, Charles became the Vicar of Ellacombe (Torquay) and Chaplain of the Western Hospital and the family moved to the Vicarage in Lower Bronshill Road, Tormohun. The living seems to have provided a good income as, in the census of 1891, they have four servants: a cook, two housemaids and a nurse. It was in Torquay that their eighth, and final, daughter was born in 1890.

Charles E. Storrs appears to have been a stern observer of the Christian faith and in 1895 he gave a sermon entitled “*If Christ came to Ellacombe*”, where he expressed his belief that Christ would be disappointed if he came to Ellacombe at that time (Dixon, 2011). He talked of “*drunken crowds*” and “*sottish selfishness*” and said that the “*evil of Intemperance (was) rampant*”. Research carried out at that time into the reason for a decline in church going amongst working men gave one of the reasons for non-attendance as the sermons being too long, too dull and too dry (Dixon, 2011).

## MR AND MRS W.A.E. USSHER

In the same year as his marriage (1893) a letter to Teall places Ussher at 5 Hoe Park Terrace in Plymouth, and it is from this address that a set of Dartmoor photos were donated to the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) at this time (Figure 5). These photographs are now in the BGS archives. This address is registered two years earlier in the census to Florence and Frederick Taylor and it is possible that they were friends of Ussher.



**Figure 5.** Photograph of Hay Tor on Dartmoor. Donated to the British Association for the Advancement of Science collection in 1893 from the address 5 Hoe Park Terrace, Plymouth, by an unknown author. In March 1893 a letter places W.A.E. Ussher at the same address. British Geological Survey, P233222.

The year 1894 saw the birth of Ussher's first son Christopher, a seemingly period after marriage. Christopher was followed relatively swiftly by William Richard in 1896 and John in 1897. A fourth son, Charles Edward, born in 1899, died young. The appearance of a family caused some disruption to his life and in a letter of 1897 to Teall Ussher writes he is "finding it difficult to focus" as "things are distributed about awaiting collection in a small house which we are taking and furnishing for three years. In lodgings here for next 2 or 3 weeks". The lodging address in question was 3 Leigham Villas on The Hoe in Plymouth, now turned into a hotel, while the small house to which he refers is possibly 2 Charlton Terrace in Mannamead, Plymouth from where he subsequently writes a series of letters, again to Teall, in 1898 to 1899. As well as discussing such geologically contentious matters as Hallsands and the Start Complex: "I can't quite see the argument for Archean", this series of letters also reveal a little about Teall, including what is an apparent vegetarian tendency where Ussher writes "I hope you got a suitable vegetable dietary. I'm making my wife's life a burden by constant queries as to whether there's any animal matter in the pie crusts" and "I can't get them to reduce the meat bill here".

In September of 1898 Ussher comments that "Woodward and his wife spent yesterday with us. He gave me Somerset abstract. Like most practical examination products it is a mixture of truth and error. On the ground I could burst up most of it, but at a meeting not as well". He complains of Fox forcing his hand "by turning about and coming on a Culm area" and bemoans "Now I shall have nothing to claim unless solve the problem had in hand since 1893 of Efford Grit". Two weeks later he still appears extremely vexed as he writes about some specimens of chert, "I daresay Woodward would like to see the specimens when he comes back. I assure you it's no pleasure to me to send them up. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to burn every geol book and map I have and go as far from this blasted country as possible". By October he is working around Tavistock and his mood continues as he writes that he "could not wish my worst enemy a more unprofitable field",

"Great Scott- a bit of alluvium becomes a Godsend". He then alludes to Teall's vegetarianism again by saying "I should like to have you on this ground for 2 days on a vegetable diet".

In 1901 Ussher's first daughter Mary was born. The census for this year records the family as living at 9 Hill Park Crescent in Plymouth. They appear fairly prosperous at this time as they have three servants: a nurse, a housemaid and a cook. Meanwhile the Storrs family have moved to 22 Salisbury Road in Hove, Sussex, presumably on the retirement of the Reverend Storrs who would have reached the age of 60 the previous year. Another son, Arland, was born to the Usshers in 1903. By this time the family had moved to Methleigh House in St Austell (the former Cornwall College, now demolished) and a number of letters from here written by Ussher to Flett, the Chief Petrographer who had followed Teall, still survive. Although mainly talking of specimens, in August 1904 he complains that the "bouse is quite full and have had to take a room out for a niece who is on a visit". Flett must have also been planning to visit because Ussher directs him to take rooms at the White Hart in Queens. Although there is no record of the name of the visiting niece, one wonders if it might have been Belinda, the daughter of Ussher's elder sister Mary who had lived with him for a period after the death of her father. The year 1904 also saw the death of the Reverend Charles Storrs at Steyning in Sussex, shortly followed by his wife Edith at the relatively young age of 57.

Records over the next few years are scarce, the last letter from Methleigh House being dated 27 March 1905, but it appears that the Usshers had moved to Sydenham before the birth of their final children, twins Joan and Betty in December 1908, taking the total number of their children to eight. Unfortunately Betty did not survive for long and her death was registered almost immediately. The following year (1909) Ussher retired from the survey, and in the census of 1911 the Ussher family are registered as living at 35 Silverdale in Sydenham, a house of fourteen rooms, with four servants. At this time his wife's younger sister, Daisy Gwendoline, a student at the Ladies Central Bureau, was also staying as well as an Irish born relative, Beverley William Ussher, a retired army captain.

Despite retirement Ussher continued to keep in touch with friends at the Geological Survey as a letter written to Flett in 1911 shows. "I congratulate you heartily on your appointment as Head of the Scotch Survey. If you care to take pot luck come to Sydenham". Further on he refers to some disagreement between him and his old friend and colleague H.B. Woodward: "That cussed old H Woodward prevented me publishing a letter of apology from Ogilvie- I'm afraid he (HB) is suffering from senile decay". "There will be a belated note from Teall in July if HW doesn't stop him". Flett did not visit as a typed note dated the following day reveals. "Dear Ussher, Many thanks for your genial note. I am afraid you must excuse me from coming to Sydenham for the present as I am working every night to get my English work finished before I go to Scotland."

## THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND AFTER

Although Ussher was too old to serve in the war his two eldest sons Christopher and William Richard were of age at the start of the conflict in 1914, the same year that Ussher was awarded the Murchison Medal of the Geological Society. Christopher, a bank clerk, is recorded as joining the Royal Fusiliers as a private, whilst William Richard had already decided on the Navy as a career, having been registered the previous year as a midshipman (probationary) on the dreadnought battleship, HMS Neptune. Although John is not of age at the start of the war, military records show a John Ussher as belonging to the 1st Machine Gun Corps and cited as a recipient of the Distinguished Conduct Medal in September 1918, although whether this is W.A.E. Ussher's son or another relative is unclear. Luckily for the Ussher family, all three sons survived the war. On his return Christopher married Violet May Grey in 1918 and settled back in south-east England, while

William Richard married Vivian Evelyn Clara Schotz in 1919 and moved to America to work as a salesman, finally becoming naturalized in 1932.

Despite increasing ill-health Ussher saw the return from the war and the marriages of his eldest sons before his death on 19 March 1920. His obituary (Anon., 1920), records that “*many British geologists will lose an old friend, who whether in his usual mood of breezy optimism, or in a rarer phase of boisterous pessimism was always good company.*” Alice Mabel Ussher remained in Sussex and eventually died in 1952 at the age of 82 years.

## A WELSH - ANTARCTIC CONNECTION

The Welsh-born Australian geologist and Antarctic explorer Sir Tannatt William Edgeworth David (usually referred to as Edgeworth David) was born in St Fagans, near Cardiff, in south Wales in 1858. It is said that he credited his interest in geology and natural history to W.A.E. Ussher, his mother's cousin, who was only nine years his senior (Branagan 2005). The proximity of his home to South-West England suggests that he may have accompanied Ussher on some of his survey work in the region.

Edgeworth David studied geology at Oxford, and subsequently focussed his work on the coalfields of South Wales. Following a brief period at the Royal School of Mines in London he accepted a position as Assistant Geological Surveyor in New South Wales, Australia, where he used his knowledge of the Welsh coalfield to discover new coal seams in the Hunter Valley on behalf of the government before taking up a position as Professor of Geology at the University of Sydney (Branagan and Vallance, 1981; Branagan 2005).

As well as his work on economic minerals he was also interested in the impact of glaciations. Photographs from the British Geological Survey archives, presented to the director Sir Archibald Geikie, probably around 1901, show glacial deposits of Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, Australia, indicating that Edgeworth David still retained a close interest in matters glacial twenty years after he read his first paper “*Evidences of Glacial Action in the Neighbourhood of Cardiff*” to the Cardiff Naturalists' Society (David, 1881). It was this interest that led to Edgeworth David becoming a member of Shackleton's expedition to the Antarctic. In 1908 he led an ascent of Mount Erebus, an active volcano, followed later in the same year by an attempt to reach the Magnetic South Pole, finally raising the flag there in January 1909 (Branagan and Vallance, 1981; Branagan 2005). Visiting Cardiff in February 1911, Edgeworth David was met by the Mayor and civic dignitaries before giving a lecture on his Antarctic endeavours (Cardiff Naturalists' Society, 1910).

The Usshers were a very close family, keeping in contact with their many relatives throughout the world and keeping family names going through the generations. Looking back to the branch of the Ussher family in Canada, it appears that the first use of the name Edgeworth came from one of the older brothers of W.A.E. Ussher's mother, Mary Jane. Captain Edgeworth Ussher, the second son of John Ussher and Mary Street, was a British Loyalist, who was killed in 1838. It is reported that he was murdered by the Canadian Benjamin Lett for his participation in the destruction of the American steamship *Caroline* (MacDonald, 1985-2013). Mary Jane and Edgeworth's sister, Margaret Ussher, made a good marriage to the Deputy Commissary-General of Canada, Tannatt Houston Thompson and it was their daughter Margaret Harriette Thompson who married the Reverend William David, the vicar of St Fagans, near Cardiff and became the mother of Edgeworth David.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

W.A.E. Ussher seems to have been almost a larger than life figure in the geological world. Despite few personal records surviving, his remaining letters give the impression of someone who was forthright in his speech, and not afraid to put forward

new ideas. His scientific study and meticulous fieldwork undoubtedly formed the foundations for many geological studies in South-West England today, yet his family life undoubtedly influenced him greatly. In his early life his mother seems to have been a great influence and he certainly lived with her during his early career, as she was well known to H.B. Woodward, although she does not appear to be mentioned in the census records of either 1861 or 1871, indicating she may have been abroad or in Ireland at the time.

Later in life the appearance of a large family does not appear to have curtailed his geological endeavours. The family appear to be moderately wealthy and employ a number of servants to help with the domestic chores. There is no indication of whether the marriage was a happy one, but Alice Mabel Ussher did not marry again after the death of her husband and remained a widow until her death 33 years later in 1952.

The story behind the Ussher family is both interesting and far reaching. This paper does not attempt to chronicle all the known facts about the branches researched, but rather restricts the accounts to those of direct relevance to W.A.E. Ussher and his immediate family. It is likely that there are still direct descendants of W.A.E. Ussher alive today, however, their privacy has been respected and no attempt has been made to trace them.

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