

The Potton site provides one of the best exposures of Woburn Sands outside of the few remaining working Greensand quarries. Visitors can be accommodated in safe and pleasant surroundings, and there is enough geodiversity, biodiversity and historical interest here to justify a visit by anybody. An interpretation board is installed at the site and more specific educational materials are available on Bedfordshire Geology Group's website.



Figure 3: Wheelchair access to the exposed rock face

The work carried out over the past year has been to further enhance the site through the addition of railings and levelling of the ground to form an accessible ramp, allowing wheelchair users and visually-impaired visitors to experience a unique site in Greensand Country. A further addition is the installation of an interpretation board for the visually impaired generously funded by The Postcode Local Trust.

The event held in March was attended by several local

partners of Greensand Country, including Potton History Society, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity and their new minibus for use by people with mobility issues. Also, in attendance was The Geologists' Association who have supported Bedfordshire Geology Group with another area of the Greensand Country project helping to develop a new publication and geotrail leaflets. The ribbon-cutting was made jointly with Bev Fowlston from Bedfordshire Geology Group and Simon Daize, our consultant wheelchair user who gave us much needed input into

the accessible ramp.

It is with much gratitude that we thank all of our donors and the players without whom none of this work would have been possible: Tesco Bags for Help, The Postcode Local Trust, Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, Potton Town Council, National Heritage Lottery Fund and several individuals who gave generously.

Book Review: William Smith's Fossils Reunited

Strata identified by organized fossils and A stratigraphical system of organized fossils

By: William Smith with fossil photographs from his collection at the Natural History Museum

Peter Wigley (editor & compiler) with Jill Darrell, Diana Clements and Hugh Torrens, 2018

Halsgrove Publishing, Wellington, Somerset, 65 plates, 150 pp.

£34.99, obtainable from the Geological Society, Natural History Museum and the British Geological Society as well as the publisher.

The bicentenary in 2015 of the publication of William Smith's great map, *A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales*, was marked in various ways, one of which was a reprint of the map, on a reduced scale, and its accompanying *Memoir* by the British Geological Survey. But there was much more to Smith's work than the map for which he is now so famous: the strata Smith showed on his map were identified and correlated and their succession established on the basis of the fossils he had collected over many years and which he described in two publications, *Strata identified by organized fossils* (1816-19) and *A stratigraphical system of organized fossils* (1817).

Earlier this year, the eve of William Smith's 250th birthday on 23 March saw the launch at the Geological Society of a reprint of these two works by Smith. A straight reissue of these very rare works would have been of value in its own right, but this significant - and substantial - new publication not only reprints them in a single volume, but supplements them with new photographic versions of the fossil plates in *Strata identified* using the same specimens from Smith's collection and adds a wealth of additional material.

Strata identified was a remarkable idea: a seven-part work of colour plates of fossils diagnostic of particular strata, using fossils collected by Smith, engraved by the leading illustrator of the day, James Sowerby, and printed on paper coloured to match those used on his 1815 map (and hence the colour of

the strata themselves). In the end, only four parts appeared, the series grinding to a halt in 1819 when Smith's financial problems came to a head.

If Smith's money woes brought an end to *Strata identified*, they provided the stimulus for the publication of *A stratigraphical system*. In 1815, even before publication of his map, Smith began negotiations to sell his fossil collection to the British Museum, and an eventual condition of that sale was that the collection be accompanied by a catalogue. A stratigraphical system is that catalogue and it was intended to be used alongside the collection in the museum. Indeed, its full title is *A stratigraphical system of organized fossils with reference to the specimens of the original geological collection in the British Museum: explaining their state of preservation and their use in identifying the British strata*.

A stratigraphical system is much more than a catalogue, however. It is an identification guide, arranged stratigraphically and taxonomically, and listing the diagnostic features of the many species described. The table of contents makes it clear that this is 'Part I' and at the foot of the page Smith states: 'Part II., which completes the Work, will be speedily published'. It wasn't. Until now.

William Smith's fossils reunited begins with a useful and informative ten-page introductory essay which explains the background to the two publications and the rationale and process behind the reprint.

Reproductions of the blue paper covers of each of the four parts of *Strata identified* are followed by Smith's introduction, with the text reset, and then the highlight of this new volume - Smith's fossil plates with, opposite each on a facing page, a modern photographic reconstruction of the plate using, where at all possible, the original specimens shown in the original plates. Where these are not available, a similar fossil from Smith's collection is used instead, and as a last resort, merely a grey silhouette if a specimen has not been found. The modern plate includes new determinations for each of the fossils where this is possible. These new plates represent a superb piece of curation by staff at the Natural History Museum and in particular Jill Darrell and Diana Clements. Between each pair of plates we have Smith's text, so everything and more is here, from the London Clay to the Fuller's Earth. *Strata identified* takes up just over half of this volume.

For this version of "...A stratigraphical system...", Peter Wigley has reformatted the original 120 pages of Smith's text into three columns in a small font which is perfectly legible, but is, I think, close to the limit for aging eyes. However as geologists, we always have our trusty handlens to rely on. Peter also includes the manuscript annotations and corrections which Smith made to a copy of his book which now resides in the University of Oklahoma Library, and adds the previously unpublished Part II, transcribed from Smith's manuscript in the archives of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. And if that were not enough, we are also presented with, for the first time, eight previously unfinished, and hence unpublished plates, either in photographic form or as original sketches accompanied by a photographic plate. *William Smith's fossils reunited* further includes redrawn

versions of Smith's Geological table of British organized fossils, his Stratigraphic table of Echinii and a Table of the distribution of ammonites drawn up by John Phillips.

Something I found of particular interest, and have never seen before, is a series of Smith's maps to which Peter has added the localities where Smith collected his specimens. The localities range across the country, but with an obvious concentration in the West of England, of course. An appendix lists all of the fossils in the plates, their modern identifications, horizon, locality and NHM registration number, and the volume concludes with an index of localities and the fossil names used by Smith.

William Smith's fossils reunited was a labour of love for Peter Wigley and his colleagues, and it shows. It is packed with detail and beautifully produced and printed with excellent clarity on a good quality, heavy gloss paper. This is an exceptional contribution to the literature and will be well-used and thumbed by Smith scholars and anyone with an interest in the history of geology and in the key figure of William Smith. Peter Wigley, Jill Darrell, Diana Clements and Hugh Torrens are to be congratulated in bringing this volume together, as are all those involved in supporting the project, especially the Dolan Charitable Trust, the Geological Society and the Natural History Museum.

The rarity of original copies of "*Strata identified and A stratigraphical system*" - fewer than 250 copies or so of each were ever published - and their modern auction prices put them beyond the reach of mere mortals, so the publication of *William Smith's fossils reunited* is a welcome and invaluable addition to any Smithian library. At £34.99 it's a bargain!

Tom Sharpe

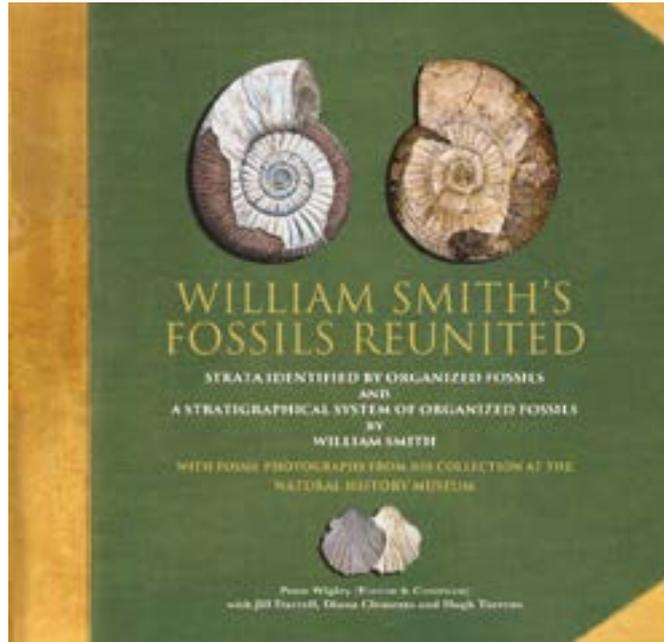


Figure 1: Illustrated Front Cover



Figure 2: Upper Cretaceous, Upper Chalk - Smith's drawings (left) and the photographed specimens (right)



Figure 3: William Smith's Plate; London Clay specimen sketches