



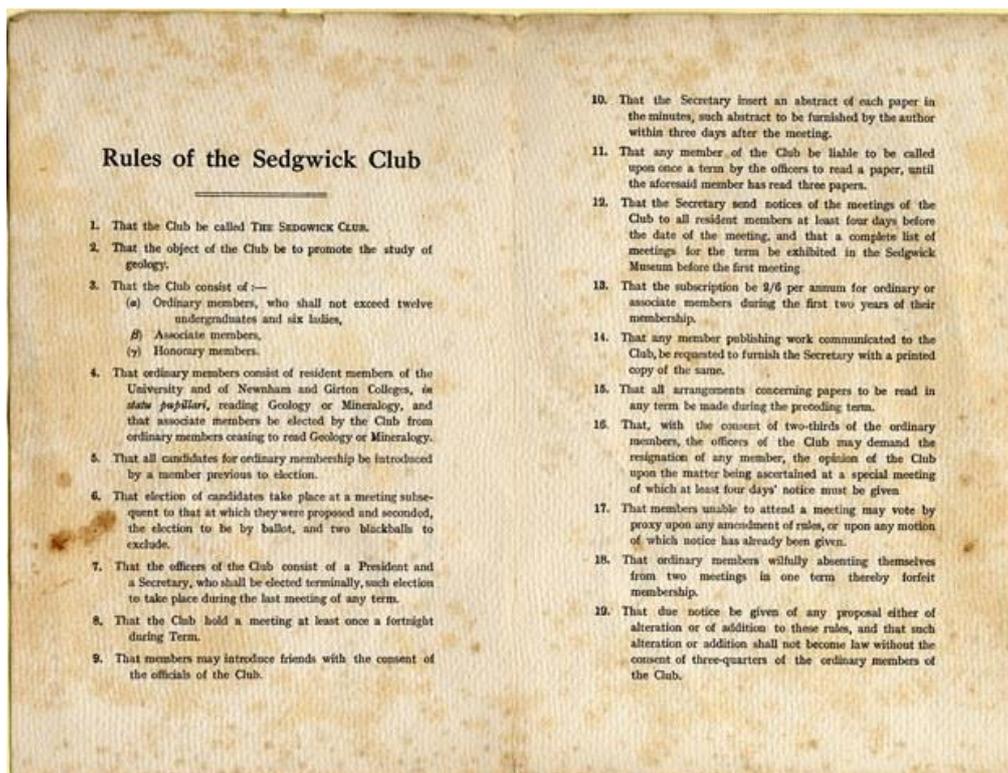
Sedgwick Museum
of Earth Sciences

'A party of stonebreakers':

Discover the Sedgwick Club Archive online

The catalogue to the Sedgwick Club Archive is now available to discover online on the 'Archives Hub' – a gateway to the documentary heritage of over 300 academic institutions across the UK. The Hub enables researchers to ascertain which series of records might provide much needed context and depth to their studies, or spark an idea for new research or investigation. The service is free and you access the catalogue here: <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/data/gb590-sgwc>

The Sedgwick Museum and the Sedgwick Club were established as memorials to Professor Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873) the Woodwardian Professor responsible for the geological collections of the University. Sedgwick was the first Professor to begin serious acquisition of specimens for the Museum, which had outgrown the Cockerill Building where they had been stored throughout the 1800s.



Rules of the Sedgwick Club, 1880. Reference: SGWC 01/01/01.

The Sedgwick Club archive is unique and extremely significant as the club is one of the first student geological clubs to be established in the UK. *'The object of the club be to promote the study of geology by the reading and discussion of papers thereof'* is still very much respected today with talks taking place regularly during term time in the Harker lecture rooms. However, rule number 4 *'that the number of members do not exceed ten'* has long since been superseded. Membership now runs into the hundreds as all new Undergraduates

The main series of records in the collection comprise over 20 detailed scrapbooks (or diaries) written during the Club expeditions which took place once a year. These records include signed lists of participants, maps and plans, diary accounts of geological and social activities, sketches, limericks and poems, cuttings, and photographs of locations, fossils, rocks and people.

There are many detailed descriptions of the geology studied and the fossils or rocks collected. In some albums there are Herbarium specimens which have been delicately displayed and labelled. The care with which the albums were written and decorated reflects the importance of the Clubs activities, especially in the period when Professor and Mrs McKenny Hughes were active members. Mary Caroline Hughes (1863-1916) was a keen photographer and artist, and it is quite likely that it was her creative influence which ensured the club kept such thorough records in its earliest period of activity.

Of particular interest to note is how the club and its activities were viewed by local inhabitants of the villages and towns they visited. This is well documented in the archive record. For example on 11th April 1921 whilst on a day-trip to Ludlow, *'...here market day was in full swing and the sleepy inhabitants of this quaint old town eyed the invasion with wonder.'* On 15th April 1927 *'The Sedgwick Club went to Wimereux and spent an energetic evening labelling and packing fossils.....not viewed in a favourable light by certain visitors to the hotel'* and in March 1929 the club shook *'....off an officer of the law who seemed to be annoyed that so many as five cars should appear in the village at one time'*. And even local wildlife were 'curious' about the visitors on the Isle of Man in 1893 - *'A curious kind of cow exists in this neighbourhood.....oranges and sandwiches were torn from the knapsacks....certain of the party maintained that rock specimens and chisels were also devoured, but this may be received in different ways by different readers of this days journal'*.



Throwing Hammers, Dolywern 1914. Reference: 02/02/16

There are countless stories to be told about the Club, and now that descriptions to the records can be discovered online, interest in this fascinating archive will hopefully lead to new research. However, many of the albums are extremely brittle having been made from poor quality wood pulp-board which has discolored and weakened. A funding application has been submitted to the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT) which would enable some of the records to be conserved by a professional paper conservator. This would ensure that future generations can enjoy studying these incredible records and learn more about the *'party of stonebreakers'* which is still so active in the Department of Earth Sciences today.

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