

Sir William Boyd Dawkins

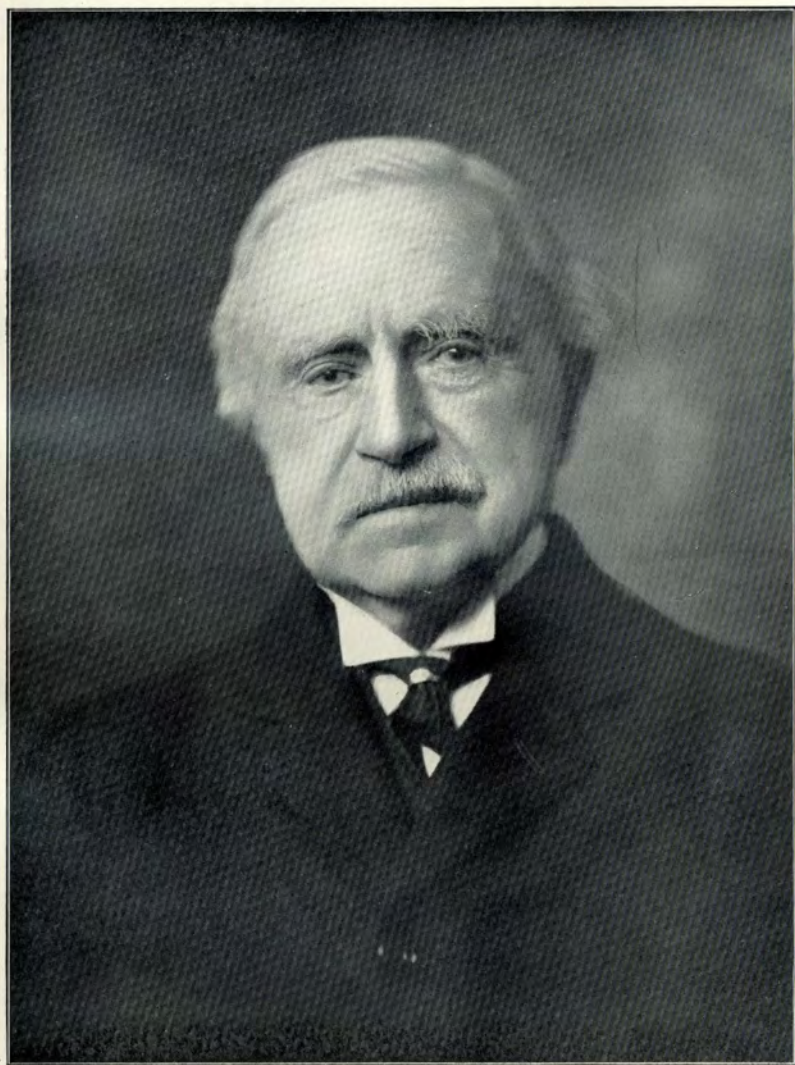
LITTLE did the writer think when issuing a memoir of General Pitt-Rivers that he would be called upon to write an obituary notice of the General's old friend and contemporary Professor Boyd Dawkins a quarter of a century later. Pitt-Rivers died in 1900 at the age of seventy-three years, whereas Boyd Dawkins attained the ripe age of ninety-one, dying on January 15th, 1929.

He was the last remaining link with a small band of antiquaries who were friends and made their names in the study of archæology in the third quarter of last century. Sir Augustus W. Franks passed away in 1897 at the age of seventy-one years ; Sir John Evans died in 1908, aged eighty-five years ; and the venerable Canon Greenwell attained the great age of nearly ninety-eight when he died in 1918. These men were the 'giants' of their time so far as British antiquities and archæological field-work were concerned, and they laid the foundations for the detailed and even more scientific work which the younger antiquaries of to-day are called upon to perform. These tasks may be in the nature of a hobby, but they entail close application and much effort to bring them to a satisfactory and acceptable conclusion.

These men, too, were something more than the above words express. Pitt-Rivers was also a distinguished anthropologist, Boyd Dawkins was a well-known consulting geologist in mining and civil engineering, Franks was gifted with considerable artistic taste embodying a wide range of knowledge, Evans excelled as a numismatist, and Greenwell was not only a first-class authority on stone and bronze implements, but also on ancient documents and architecture.

All these men have made an indelible mark, and have left behind them collections which have been secured for the benefit of the public at large.

But we must now turn to Boyd Dawkins and recall some of his Somerset associations in particular. One of the outstanding facts is that he was 'the father' of the Somerset Archæological Society for the last eight years of his life, as he joined the Society in 1863. Previously, Dawkins' friend, the Rev. H. H. Winwood of Bath,



W. Byrd Senior

who joined the Society in 1860 and died at the age of ninety years at the close of 1920, was 'the father' of the Society. Only one other member now remains from the sixties (1866), namely, the Rev. Dr. W. Hunt, at one time an honorary secretary.

Although William Boyd Dawkins was born at Buttington Vicarage, Welshpool, on 26 December in the year of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne (1837), he used to speak of himself as a Somerset man. His early connection with Somerset occurred at the age of sixteen when his father, the Rev. Richard Dawkins, became Vicar of Westonzoyland in 1853. When twenty-two years of age Boyd Dawkins became interested in Wookey Hole, and during this period his father died (1860) and was buried in the churchyard at Westonzoyland, where there is a tomb to his memory, and a tablet records his name in the church.

At this time Boyd Dawkins, who had previously been at Rossall, was an undergraduate at Jesus College, Oxford. He was much interested in these days in the Sedgemoor battlefield and was instrumental in identifying the exact site of the burials (*Proc.* lxvi, xxxii). It was, therefore, extremely appropriate that he should have been asked to plant a tree to mark the spot and deliver an address on the anniversary of the fight, 6 July 1927 (*Som. Co. Gaz.*, 16 July 1927).

Perhaps the most valuable of Dawkins' earlier papers was 'Wookey Hole Hyæna Den', describing his discoveries of 1859-61 (*Proc.* xi, 197-219; also Evans, *Stone Implements*, 1872, 472-4). This paper was followed by another 'On the Caves of Burrington Combe', explored in 1864 by himself and his colleague, W. Ayshford Sanford (of Nynhead). This was published in *Proc.* xii, 161-176.

From 1861 to 1869 Dawkins was a geologist to the Geological Survey, and in 1870 was appointed Curator of the Manchester Museum. Two years later he became Lecturer in Geology in the Owens College, Manchester, and in 1874 Professor of Geology and Palæontology in the same college (later in the Victoria University). After his retirement in 1908 he was appointed honorary professor.

From 1866 to 1872 he and W. A. Sanford produced their work on the 'British Pleistocene Mammalia' issued in parts by the Palæontographical Society. In this connection these gentlemen classified the bones of the extinct mammalia of the Mendip Hills belonging at that time to the Society, and which are now exhibited in the Great Hall of Taunton Castle. In 1872 Dawkins addressed our Society on 'Ancient Geography in the West of England' (*Proc.* xviii, i, 26-32).

Boyd Dawkins entered into the Pen Pits controversy and made a report which was printed in *Proc.* xxiv, i, 59-61. He also described the geology of Ham Hill (*Proc.* xxxii, i, 41-45), and spoke at some length on Cheddar Gorge and Caves (*Proc.* xxxiv, i, 32-40, and lv, i, 75-78). The last time on which he addressed the Society was on 12 July 1927 (in his ninetieth year), when he described Snowdon Hill Quarry and the geology of Chard. He also took part and spoke at the Dulverton Meeting 1923, and Glastonbury 1926.

The professor was an honorary life member and became President at the Wellington Meeting in 1912, when he addressed the Society 'On Some Points in the Prehistoric Archaeology of Somerset' (*Proc.* lviii, i, 13-26); and again at Clevedon, ten years later, when his presidential address was entitled 'The Ethnology of Somerset from the Neolithic Age to the close of the Roman Dominion' (*Proc.* lxxviii, ii, 1-7). From 1913 to 1921 and from 1923 until his death he was a vice-president of the Society.

One of the professor's chief compilations for the county was his chapter on 'Early Man' in the first volume of the *Victoria County History*, issued in 1906.

He became a Master of Arts, Doctor of Science (Oxford), Hon. Doctor of Science (Manchester), and a Fellow of the Royal and Geological Societies and of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

For his many services to geology, archaeology and some of the kindred sciences a knighthood was conferred upon him in 1919. Sir William's genial presence at our Society's meetings was a source of great pleasure to his many friends, and he was always missed when unable to come. Lady Boyd Dawkins (formerly Mrs. Hubert Congreve) generally accompanied him and took a keen interest in the professor's work.

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