

FROM TAUNTON TO THE PYRENEES: THE REVD WILLIAM ARTHUR JONES AND THE EARLY DAYS OF THE SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

‘This boulder From Staple Fitz-paine Records That a munificent Donation In aid of the purchase of The Castle grounds of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society Was made by the friends of William Arthur Jones M.A. for 20 years one of its honorary secretaries as a Memorial of their respect for his talents and Esteem for his virtues.

Ob. 23 Ap. 1873 aet.54’

These words, set into a large sarsen stone in the moat of Taunton Castle, commemorate the contribution made to the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society by William Arthur Jones. When he died in Taunton towards the end of April 1873 his funeral was a major event attended by the two local MPs. People lined the streets and local papers ran long complimentary obituaries. By the end of the century he had been given an entry in the Dictionary of National Biography. Since then, however, there has been little recognition of the part he played for 20 years in the life of Taunton, whether in the Society or through his many other activities. There is no reference to him in the reports in the *Proceedings* of the Society’s 50th and 100th anniversary celebrations.

This paper was inspired by a chance find of letters that he wrote in 1867 to William Ayshford Sanford of Nynehead Court, also a key figure in the Society.¹ The letters were of particular interest to the author because of where they were written – the French Pyrenees – and their content. As well as telling Sanford about his family’s life during a two year stay in the south of France, Jones describes his

scientific activities and his contacts with members of the Société Ramond, the Pyrenean counterpart to the Society. However, the time that he spent in France formed only part of a much bigger story and this paper concentrates on his life in Somerset and the part he played in the Society’s early days.

CARMARTHEN AND BRIDGEND

William Arthur Jones was born on 1 May 1818 in the Welsh town of Carmarthen, the youngest of the ten children of cooper William Jones and his wife Sarah.² His father died in the 1820s, and although his mother lived until 1863, Arthur was brought up by his eldest brother John who, from 1821 until his death, was the Unitarian minister in Bridgend, Glamorganshire.

The Jones family was particularly associated with the Heol Awst chapel in Lammas Street in the centre of Carmarthen where William senior was a deacon,³ so it is not surprising that in 1834 Arthur followed his brother John’s example and entered the Carmarthen Presbyterian College. It was a centre for training Presbyterian ministers but also accepted a few students for the Unitarian ministry.

At the college Jones studied the full range of subjects needed for the ministry – Hebrew, Greek, Latin, theology and natural philosophy – but he was already greatly interested in archaeology, history and geology and from that point of view the Carmarthen area had plenty to offer.⁴ He took a daily ‘constitutional’ in the town but often ventured further afield often with specific aims. Once after attending chapel he went to listen to a nightingale. Nothing

was heard! On another he went into the country to try out the accuracy of a friend's 'theodolet'. He attended a lecture at the town hall on astronomy and saw several objects magnified by the 'Oxy-Hydrogen microscope' such as a drop of water, the leg of a bee and a dragonfly's wing. Twenty years later he was to give his own talks on the application of the microscope to the investigation of natural history and archaeology.⁵

However his greatest interest was in geology, as shown on 15 September 1837 when he walked a short distance to the south west of the town:

'With cl. fell. [class fellows(s)] took a walk to a quarry on Penalty Knap. Found no organic remain [i.e. fossils]. Observed that the strata were almost perpendicular, and in one place contorted as if by a great convulsion. The science of geology formed the subject of our conversation on our return. None of my cl. fell. had studied this science at all.'

The 1830s were an exciting time for a 19-year-old with an interest in geology. The bible-based accounts of the history of the Earth were being challenged and the planet was being subjected to description and classification as never before. The college's library contained books on geology dating back to the beginning of the 18th century, as well as the *Penny Magazine*. Published by the wonderfully named Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge it included much new information on the natural world. Jones had his own copies of geological works, including Buckland's '*Bridgewater Treatise on Geology*'. He was taken with the new ideas, perhaps a reflection of his religious background and possibly inspired by scientists from the Dissenting tradition such as Joseph Priestley. Having read 'Ray's proof of the Deluge'⁶ he commented: 'A curious old work. What confused and obscure notions they had of the formation of the crust of the Earth. What appears difficult to Ray, is now quite clear from the modern science of geology'.

In the summer of 1838 Jones left the College and walked the 45 miles to Bridgend to stay with his brother John. He spent July and August there, assisting at his brother's school, collecting fossils and pursuing his studies, prior to going to Glasgow University. His aim was to enter the Unitarian ministry, so in September he went to London 'to stand an examination for one of Dr William's Glasgow Scholarships. I was one of six candidates for 3 scholarships and so fortunate as to be placed first on the list of successful candidates'.

GLASGOW

Jones took up his scholarship in Glasgow in the autumn of 1838. His main contact and mentor at the Dr Williams's Foundation was James Yates who had also studied at Glasgow and shared Jones's interest in geology and archaeology. Yates was a Fellow of the Geological Society, of the Linnean Society, and of the Royal Society, and was appointed secretary to the Council of the British Association in 1831.⁷ Jones attended the University from 1838 to 1841 studying Ethics, Moral Philosophy, Classics, Hebrew, Elocution and Mathematics. As in Carmarthen and Bridgend he pursued his many interests and developed new ones. He explored the surrounding area, took geological specimens from South Wales to the Hunterian Museum and became politically active, joining the Liberal Association.

Glasgow as a city did not appeal to a young man from rural Wales and Jones was much happier in the surrounding countryside. Shortly before finishing his studies in 1841 he commented that he longed to escape from the 'smoky and dirty city' and could be happy to spend years in a 'small retired town or village'. He also felt that men are 'morally' better in the country than in the town.⁸

First contacts with Somerset

It was while at University that Jones made his first contact with Somerset. In the summer of 1839 he did 'supply' as a minister for nine weeks at the Free Christian and Unitarian chapel in Hermitage Street in Crewkerne. The chapel accounts record that in 1839 a sum of £7.7.0 was paid to the 'Rev. W.A. Jones for his time serving the congregation' while John Munford received £9.9.0 for 'nine weeks board of W.A. Jones'.⁽⁹⁾ The Dissenting community was small and Jones's name could well have been obtained through the Dr Williams's Foundation.

The minister of the chapel was Dr William Blake, and Jones's time in Crewkerne led to a lifelong friendship with his son William who shared his interest in geology. Writing to him from Bridgend in October 1839 Jones promised to send fossils that he had collected from the limestone quarries around the town.

NORTHAMPTON

Jones's aspirations to settle in a 'small retired town or village' were not satisfied immediately as his first

appointment was in the rapidly growing industrial town of Northampton. He took the pulpit in the chapel in King Street for the first time on the second Sunday in May 1841.¹⁰ His time in Northampton was not always easy, at least as far as his ministry was concerned, but for his interests in natural history and archaeology his stay there was very important. At first he lodged with George Baker and his sister Anne, both members of his congregation. George Baker was a noted historian of Northamptonshire and Anne assisted him with his work, particularly on geology and botany. She was also a notable author in her own right, publishing in 1854 her *Glossary of Northamptonshire Words and Phrases*.¹¹ John Robberds, Jones's brother-in-law, suggested in his obituary sermon for Jones that it was the contact with George Baker that inspired, or developed, his interest in antiquarian matters.¹² However inspiration surely also came from Anne's interest in geology, botany and dialect.

A major change in Arthur Jones's life came after a year in Northampton when he married Mary Cuff, daughter of James and Joanna Cuff of Merriott near Crewkerne in south Somerset. Mary was born on 11 December 1808, the youngest of five children, and was baptised at the Crewkerne chapel by Dr Blake. The Cuffs were members of the chapel so Mary and Arthur must have met when he was there in 1839. She clearly made an impression on him although, or perhaps because, she was nine and a half years his senior! They were married on 9 June 1842 in the Crewkerne chapel but sadly Mary died only four months later at the age of 33, of anaemia arising from gynaecological complications. She was buried in the family tomb in Merriot churchyard. Jones felt the loss of his wife sorely and early in 1843 took a break from his ministry and spent three months travelling in northern Europe.¹³ An account of the journey is for another occasion but it is interesting to note that as it was too early to include a photograph, Jones' passport contains a written description of his appearance: he was 5' 8" in height, with blue eyes, an aquiline nose, an average forehead and mouth, a round chin and an oval face.¹⁴

By the end of his travels Jones was seriously considering going to Geneva to study theology¹⁵ but in the event stayed in Northampton, although still not settled. He was keen to be in Somerset, probably to be closer to the Blakes, and accepted an invitation to preach at the Unitarian Chapel in Bath on 15 January 1845 with the aim of taking up a post there. He did not move to Bath but his links with the Blakes remained strong and on New Years Day 1846 he

married William's sister Margaret at the Mary Street Chapel in Taunton. Three years later he finally moved with his family, now with a son Downing, to Bridgwater where he had been appointed minister of the Christchurch chapel in Dampiet Street.

SOMERSET

Jones took up his post in Bridgwater at Michaelmas in 1849 and moved to a house in King Square. The 1851 Census shows that there were now three children, Downing (aged 4) and two daughters born in Bridgwater – Margaret (2) and Sarah Elizabeth (1). The family were quite well-off as there were three servants – 24 year-old Elizabeth Brewer (born in Cannington), Harriet Wallis (aged 32) and Lucy Wallis (aged 23). Harriet and Lucy were born in Peterborough and Grantham respectively, suggesting that they had come to Bridgwater with the family.

While in Bridgwater Jones continued his other interests. He attended meetings of the town's Literary and Scientific Institution which had been founded in about 1838 and which put on lectures on a variety of subjects. Jones did not have a central role in the Institution. The AGM in 1850 was the first one he had attended for some time but he was moved to propose a resolution on the future of the organisation as it was not doing too well.¹⁶ Attendances were low and there was a problem of inexperienced speakers.¹⁷ A meeting was held in August 1852¹⁸ to revive the Institution but by then Jones was moving to be minister of the Mary Street Chapel in Taunton, which was to be his spiritual base for the rest of his life.

The Jones family continued to grow with the addition of three sons and two daughters, but he suffered another loss when in 1860 Margaret died of 'phthisis pulmonalis' (tuberculosis), leaving him a widower for the second time. A year later the census records that Silver Street House in South Road in Taunton was home to Arthur Jones, four sons, four daughters, a 21-year-old niece (as governess) and three servants. The house, now used as offices, is a Grade 2 listed building, described as 18th century, with a rendered façade to the road hiding two wings of red brick. Jones's youngest son John recalled that although a 'fine Queen Anne house of red brick' it had its faults, having been neglected with a badly leaking roof and no drainage.¹⁹ This did not help the children's health and sadly there was yet more tragedy when in 1864 the eldest son Downing died, leaving Jones a widower with seven children aged 5 to 15.

The Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society

While in Bridgwater Jones joined the newly-formed Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, appearing in the first list of members along with 29 other residents of the town. On moving to Taunton he became even more immersed in the activities of the Society and in 1853 replaced William Baker, who had died, as the secretary of the Natural History Department. In 1858 he was one of three general secretaries, with the Revd F. Warre and Mr W.F. Elliot. He remained a general secretary of the Society until his death, in partnership with between two and four other members, although the reports in the *Proceedings* suggest that after Warre's death he had the leading role.

In addition to his administrative role in the Society, Jones was an active participant in the field visits that formed an essential part of its annual meetings. The fact that he was responsible for organising these and for recording what happened on them no doubt accounts for the frequent and detailed references to what he said, including occasions on which his colleagues did not entirely agree with his opinions, albeit in a friendly way. On 13 September 1854 members visited Cothelstone Beacon on the Quantocks where the Revd F. Warre gave an 'Exposition of the view'. After describing what could be seen – '...below us extends the Gwlad-yr-hav, the 'summerfields' of the celtic poets, which with the heights of the Quantocks and the northern coast of Somerset, was the residence of the western Cangî.' – he referred to Jones's opinion of the meaning of 'Gwlad-yr-Havren' (Jones was fluent in both Welsh and English):

'I am well aware that my learned friend and colleague, Mr. Jones, will tell you that the "summer-field" is a false translation of the Celtic name, and that Gwlad-yr-havren simply signifies "the land on the coast of the Severn" and it would, indeed, be presumptuous in me to doubt the correctness of his interpretation, but when I look down on that beautiful plain, I hope to be excused (for the day at least), I hold the more poetical translation to be the right one, and believe with Harne, that the Cangî named that beautiful vale and plain "the laughing summer-field"''.²⁰

Jones was a regular and frequent speaker at meetings of the Society. Up to his death in 1873 he gave ten papers at full meetings and a further 22 at *conversazioni*. His topics were wide-ranging, equally

split between geology and history/archaeology. Most were about the Taunton and West Somerset area but he also spoke on more general scientific matters. At a *conversazione* in November 1855 the microscope was his subject, followed in January of the next year with consideration of its application to archaeology and natural history. In November 1856 the French metrical system received his attention.²¹ The *conversazioni* speakers and their topics are listed in the *Proceedings* but without the text. Fortunately the local press often published not only the text but also information about the audience and of the discussion that took place. [This helps the researcher as the original text does not often survive and where it does it might not be legible.]²²

Jones's own researches included a long-term project exploring the Blake family pedigree, corresponding on this with the antiquary Sir Thomas Phillips to whom he had been introduced by George Baker in Northampton. At times he found himself working under extreme conditions: during one winter he had to sit in the freezing church at Bishops Hull looking at documents, a far cry from the comfort of today's Record Office!²³

His activities in the Society and his research interests brought Jones into contact with local people of like mind such as William Ayshford Sanford and Charles Moore. It seems that he had particularly close ties with Sanford despite their very different family backgrounds, although politically they were both Liberals. Sanford was also for a time a secretary of the Society and later its president. The geologist Charles Moore was born in Ilminster and was a member of the congregation of the Unitarian chapel in Bath where he might first have met Jones in 1845. In his paper 'On the Middle and Upper Lias' given to the Society in 1866 he described a fossil from the Upper Lias at Compton – *turbo jonesei* – that he had named after Jones.²⁴ Enquiries at the Natural History Museum have identified its current name (it is a synonym of *Turbo capitaneus*) but the whereabouts of Moore's original specimen is not known. Jones's particular interest in geology had already been recognised when he was elected as a Fellow of the Geological Society of London in 1858, one of his proposers being Dr James Yates.

There were also foreign contacts. In 1853 Revd Charles Henry Brigham visited Taunton. He was a congregational minister from Taunton, Massachusetts, and a leading member of that town's Old Colony Historical Society. On a year-long tour of the principal cities of the Old World he was



William Arthur Jones in the 1850s/60s (Blake Archives)

making reports on his travels from week to week which were published in his home town journal known as the 'Whig'. His visit to Somerset made a strong impression on him. It was said in his obituary that 'the collection of these letters would make a large volume of records of travel, including interesting historical sketches of ancient Taunton, England.'²⁵

Brigham kept in touch with Jones after his return to Massachusetts and in January 1856 the latter was unanimously chosen to be a corresponding member of the Old Colony Historical Society. There was an exchange of documents of historical interest but Brigham's letters to Jones also touch on political matters, including the state of the anti-slavery movement and the presidential election campaign then under way. He asks if a letter addressed to the magistrates in Taunton on the subject of international peace had in fact arrived and commends to Jones other visitors to Taunton from Massachusetts including an Edward Sanford ('son of Rev Enoch Sanford of Raynham, a neighbour and friend of mine').²⁶

Not surprisingly fieldwork played an important role in Jones' life. William Baker recorded in his paper 'The Cannington Park Limestone' that

'Since I read my paper in Taunton, and the discovery of mollusc shells in this Limestone has been otherwise mentioned, the Rev. W. A. Jones, of Taunton, and Mr. Moore, of Ilminster, in a brief search amongst some heaps of this stone, by the roadside near Bridgwater, cracked out three or four tolerably good specimens of distinct species of bivalve shells'.²⁷

Shortly before her death Jones took his wife Margaret to Dawlish in May 1860 as she was ill and it was hoped that she would benefit from the sea air. While caring for her Jones found time to explore the fauna and flora of the seashore and to send specimens to William Sanford.²⁸

On the archaeological front Jones had taken part in the excavation at the Roman villa at Pitney which brought to light a beautiful tessellated floor not previously explored. The excavation had been directed by Mr Fry of Curry Rivel but at the visit to the site on the annual meeting in Langport in August 1861 it was Jones who spoke about the finds, as noted at some length in the *Proceedings*.²⁹ A year later he was involved in what we would now call 'rescue archaeology'. During the construction of the Taunton to Watchet Railway he retrieved a large collection of Romano-British pottery near Norton Fitzwarren which he presented to the museum. The need for action had been brought to his attention by Charles Welman of Norton Manor but it was Jones who organised the excavations, taking along a group of young archaeologists.³⁰ The site is shown on the 1st edition of the OS 25" map. In his report to the Annual Meeting in Wellington on 20 August the Revd F. Warre said there was a lesson to be learnt from this:

'The fact that this extensive series of specimens, so valuable for illustration, would in all probability have been buried under the railway if the collection of them had been sufficiently delayed only twenty-four hours, affords a sufficient ground to your Committee for urging members of the Society to make prompt and careful observations wherever works of this character are being executed'.³¹

The Society's museum

From the Society's beginning a museum had been established on a temporary basis at the Market House in Taunton and the *Proceedings* list the items donated and exhibited at meetings. One of the most important acquisitions during Jones's time was the collection

of fossils from the Banwell caves put together by William Beard. Jones shared an interest in these caves with William Sanford and had given a paper on the Mendip bone caverns to the Society in 1857.³² He had visited the caves and recorded measurements of elephant bones.³³ In August 1862 Beard, then aged over 90, wrote, presumably to Jones, saying that 'I believe my splendid collection will be sold soon after my death, unless I sell it before'.³⁴ The Society invited subscriptions and by the Annual Meeting in Burnham in 1864 the purchase had been successfully carried out.³⁵

Jones himself contributed many items to the museum. The current County Museum records list 15 items of fossils and rocks obtained both locally and further afield, including igneous rock from Hestercombe, a *Gorgonia verrucosa* from Seaton and Silurian fossils from Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire. [Not all of these can be traced]. However the *Proceedings* list many items not geological in nature: an ancient teapot with the legend 'no cider tax, apples at liberty', a milking stool dug from an old filled up water course under old houses in St James's Street in Taunton, and 'The Battle of Sedgemoor, Rehearsal at White hall, a farce'. The last of these had been exhibited but presumably not performed at the local museum in Langport during the 13th Annual Meeting in 1861.

The previous 30 years had seen much interest in dinosaurs, and one of the most significant of Jones's contributions was mentioned by William Sanford in his report about the museum in 1859:

'The only fossil of importance we have received during this year is a portion of the skeleton of a very large ichthyosaurus, from Stoke St Mary, the first I believe found in that locality. For this we are indebted to the kindness of Mr. Arthur Jones, our excellent secretary'.³⁶

This is still in the County Museum's collection, but it is not known whether Jones himself excavated it.

Items for the museum came from all over the world. On 8 July 1871 Charles Brooke, the second Rajah of Sarawak, wrote to Jones advising that he had dispatched various items for the museum by the barque *Alcestis*.³⁷ In a barrel were 'flying lemurs, white marked squirrels, small deer, a white kind of rat, a small alligator, a young maias (?) and one or two others the names of which I do not know'. Entrusted to the captain was a shield. Some of these and more are recorded as donations to the museum: 'Alligator's skull and claws, skin of boa, tortoise

shell, Dyak war jackets, women's petticoats, waist cloths, seat mat, earrings, armlets, war charms, spear heads, spikes, swords, and shield, from H.H. THE RAJAH OF SARAWAK'.³⁸ Brooke had Somerset connections being the son of Revd Charles Johnson, vicar of Whitelackington near Ilminster, and his wife Emma (née Brooke). It is possible that he made contact with Jones in October 1869 when he came to England to marry Margaret de Windt of Wiltshire.

There was a steady stream of donations to the museum but there were problems with the conservation of some items. In November 1865 Jones was concerned about the state of a gorilla which was becoming 'very unpleasant – to use the mildest term' and asked William Sanford if he would be present to give advice when its case was opened in the garden of the College School.³⁹

FRANCE

Arthur Jones's life in Taunton came to an abrupt albeit temporary end in October 1866 when he surprised his Mary Street congregation by announcing that he was leaving the town for the south of France.⁴⁰ It was the health of his daughter Margaret that was giving most cause for concern but other children were also affected. Initially he was expected to return after one winter in France but in the event he stayed away much longer, resigning from his Mary Street post in February 1867.

He took his family to the town of Pau, the capital of the Basse-Pyrénées Département and a town so popular with the British in the 19th century that it became known as 'la ville anglaise'.⁴¹ The expatriate British community developed a strong social life, with a club, churches, and sporting activities and at least one volume published by the Pau Book Society found its way into the Society's library.⁴²

Several people with Somerset connections were among those who made their way to Pau during the later 19th and early 20th century. A monument in Ashcott church records that Elizabeth Clarke died in Pau in 1855 aged 77, while one at Otterhampton church reveals that Somerset JP John Jeffrey Guy Evered ended his days there in 1880; William Gibbs of Tyntesfield spent a year in Pau in 1865;⁴³ in 1914 the chaplain at St Andrew's Anglican church was the Revd R. Acland-Troyte.⁴⁴ Edward A. Freeman visited the Pyrenees in 1867.⁴⁵

It was however two papers given to the Society that probably encouraged Jones to go to the Pyrenees.

In March 1856 Farnham Maxwell Lyte presented a paper to a *conversazione* entitled 'On photography'. Lyte was the son of the Revd Henry Francis Lyte, best known as the author of the hymn 'Abide with me' who had died in 1847. At Norton Fitzwarren Church in February 1851 he had married Eleanor Julia Bolton with whom he moved in 1853 to the south of France. Lyte had wide-ranging scientific interests but was best known for his pioneering work in photography and especially for his landscapes of the Pyrenees, becoming known as 'le père de la photographie pyrénéenne'.⁴⁶ His photographs were widely exhibited in Europe and although his paper to the Society was largely about photographic techniques it was accompanied by a display of several views of the Pyrenees.⁴⁷

How Lyte came to give this paper is not known. However, his marriage certificate records that Eleanor Bolton was living at the time of their wedding at Norton Manor, home of Charles Noel Welman, a founder member and vice-president of the Society, who presumably was a family friend or relative. It seems that Welman kept in touch with the Lytes as he himself visited the Pyrenees at least twice, in 1860 and 1861. In January 1862 he gave a paper about the Pyrenees to a Society *conversazione*, showing photographs of the area, probably provided by Lyte.⁴⁸ Jones would have been present on both occasions so it is not surprising that he found his way to this part of the south of France rather than one of the other areas favoured by the British.

After spending the winter of 1866–7 in Pau the family moved to Argelès-de Bigorre (now Argelès-Gazost) in the mountains to the south of Lourdes.⁴⁹ Here they spent their time exploring and visiting tourist sites. Jones found much of historical interest in the area, which is noted for fine churches and castles. These include the fortified Templar church at Luz where he made rubbings of ancient inscriptions. He intended to bring back copies for the Society but they do not seem to have survived. He also had a specific commission from William Sanford who at that time was working on his study of the Felis species.⁵⁰ Sanford was interested in skeletons and asked Jones if possible to obtain specimens. It was not an easy task:

'I have been making enquiries about skeletons here but there are great difficulties. Whenever an izard is taken the hotel-keepers pounce upon it at once and you know that the French style of carving cannot fail to be fatal to your purposes. The heads may be had, mounted or as skeletons,

but the whole frame of any of these not without incurring a great outlay I fear.'⁵¹

While in the Pyrenees Jones made contact with members of the Société Ramond which had been founded in 1864 to promote the scientific study of the area. As Farnham Maxwell Lyte was one of the Société's four founding members the similarity of the its aims with those of the Society leads one to wonder if the contact he had with the latter in the 1850s had any influence. There were differences: the membership of the French society was limited, initially at least, to 50⁵² whereas the Society in 1850 had 339 members. Clergymen played a much greater role in the Society in the early days – one third of the members – whereas of the 42 members of the Société Ramond in 1867 only five were men of the cloth, including two expatriate Anglicans. Both organisations had corresponding and honorary members, often academics.

Jones had particular contact with two of the four founders. Lyte has already been mentioned. Of the other three (Emilien Frossard, Charles Packe and Henry Russell) Frossard had most in common with Jones. Born in 1802 he was a French protestant minister who also had an interest in geology. He had lived in England and had married Isabelle Trye in Bath in 1826. His grandson, also Emilien, later came to Somerset where for many years in the early 20th century he was the much respected doctor in Bishops Lydeard. It was with Frossard that Jones was able to pursue his geological interests, especially in the field of glacial studies. The valley of the Gave de Pau, from its source at the Cirque de Gavarnie on the Spanish border to the terminal moraine just to the north of Lourdes, was of particular interest to students of the Quaternary glaciation of the Pyrenees. Jones and Frossard contributed to a major study being carried out by Charles Martins (of the University of Montpellier) and Edouard Collomb (of the Société Géologique de France) both members of the Société Ramond. A copy of their findings, published in 1868, was given to the Society, inscribed 'Somersetshire archaeological and natural history Society from the authors'.⁵³

Towards the end of September 1867 Jones and his family left Argelès for Montpellier. He had enjoyed his time in the mountains but was beginning to feel the need to return to Taunton. He did however have some unfinished business in the Pyrenees. He was not having much success in finding skeletons for Sanford but his son John Jones recalled later that 'In a stream father secured a 'desmond rat' a sort of

vole with long snout and very rare. He got it stuffed by Arthur and put it in Taunton museum after our return'.⁵⁴

Jones spent the winter in Montpellier. Early in February 1868 he took a trip through the Midi via Narbonne and Carcassonne to Toulouse. In Narbonne he visited the museum, where human remains were of interest, and made notes about the cathedral.⁵⁵ In Toulouse he met M. Filhol, Director of the College of Medicine, Mayor of the town and a member of the Société Ramond. Filhol was greatly interested in fossils and took Jones over the Museum of Natural History which was especially rich in *Cane* bones. Jones saw distinct advantages in the Society sharing information and specimens with the Toulouse Museum⁵⁶ but no evidence has been found that this actually happened.

Jones's aim was to make the most of the educational advantages of Montpellier and to return to England at the end of May 1868, but the attractions of the area must have been strong as the family remained a little longer. However their stay was marked by a yet another loss as on 15 June his daughter Mary died and was buried in the town. This spurred their return to England.

THE RETURN TO TAUNTON

On their return to England, via a brief stay near Geneva, the family stayed with their Blake relatives near South Petherton before moving to 3, The Crescent in Taunton. In the summer of 1869 Jones spent several weeks at Porlock Weir before taking up residence at Tauntonfield, in South Road, Taunton where he was to spend the rest of his life. He rejoined the congregation at the Mary Street Chapel but dropped the title of 'Reverend'. As he explained to William Sanford:

'During the time I was engaged in the *active* duties of the Ministry I always expected the *prefix*, not for my *own* but for my *office* sake. Now that to all practical purposes I am become more than half a layman I am quite indifferent'.⁵⁷

He resumed his duties as secretary to the Society at a time when important decisions were becoming necessary, especially in respect of the museum collections. The Society welcomed his return as during his absence the organisation had coped with difficulty. Although in the Pyrenees Jones had already been aware of this through his correspondence with William Sanford:

'I am sorry to find the Archaeological is absolutely without a Secretary. I wonder at Mr. Brown's giving up. It would have done Mr. Elliot a world of good if he had buckled to and done himself what work there was to be done. What I am most afraid of is that unless an *Executive* can be found at Taunton the headquarters of the Society may be moved elsewhere'.⁵⁸

As before Jones read papers to meetings as well as organising visits but he was not always happy with the arrangements. At the Annual Meeting in Crewkerne in 1871 Edward Freeman gave a paper on the role and scope of the Society. At the evening session Jones 'expressed his regret that papers on Natural History had been crowded out. He had proposed a paper on the geology of Crewkerne and its neighbourhood, but there was no time to read it. He thought that some arrangement should be made for devoting a second day to the reading of papers'.⁵⁹

On at least one occasion Jones's personal activities led to some dissatisfaction among his colleagues. He had written to William Sanford on 15 June 1869 giving details of a visit to Mendip, 'which would not be complete if we do not visit the Caverns and have an exposition of the cave bones'. One of the excursions would be from Axbridge to Rowberrow, Dolbury camp, Burrington Church, Combe and caves, and over the Mendip to Cheddar Gorge. Jones was concerned about Burrington Cave: 'Is it accessible to ladies? I mean the ordinary run of women'. His letter ended by saying that he would be going to Porlock Weir on 17 June and hoped the arrangements would be in place by then.⁶⁰ However on 29 June William Hunt, the local secretary in Bristol, wrote to Sanford (presumably) that 'as I have had the bother of arranging our meeting this year I am very anxious that it should go off well Jones will stay in Porlock wh[ich] has occasioned no little letter writing'.⁶¹ The excursion did take place on 8 September, the second day of the Annual Meeting at Axbridge. Jones was present and with Boyd Dawkins, Charles Moore and others contributed to a discussion on the age of the lead mines of the Mendips.⁶²

At this time the Society, in addition to its local activities, was caught up in the development of a national approach to the conservation of historic monuments. At the Annual Meeting in Wincanton in 1870 Jones reported on representations to the Secretary of State about the matter.⁶³ By the AGM in Taunton a year later it had been agreed to set up a committee to co-operate with the promoters of a

legislative measure for the protection and preservation of Historical Monuments. A list of the more interesting monuments in the county had been prepared, and Jones and F.H. Dickinson had had an interview with Sir John Lubbock, MP for Maidstone, with the view of furthering the campaign.⁶⁴ A Bill was to be presented in Parliament in the next session but legal protection for ancient monuments was not achieved until 1882 after several failed attempts.

ARTHUR JONES'S CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Before his departure for the Pyrenees Jones had interested himself in civic activities in Taunton. On his return, partly perhaps because he had no duties at the chapel, he became even more involved, often at an influential level. When reporting in the autumn of 1873 a proposal to establish a memorial to him, the *Taunton Courier* commented that 'No man in this place, probably, during the last twenty years, has contributed more efficiently to those local institutions which mark the higher civilisation of a town'.⁶⁵ A brief survey of his activities shows the range of his interests.

Jones was involved in promoting education in its broad sense. In 1856 he founded the Taunton School of Art and was its honorary secretary until his death; he was secretary of the local committee of the Oxford examinations syndicate and chairman of the proprietors of the Taunton Institution; in November 1865 he helped organise a Taunton Industrial Exhibition where he exhibited two ancient records, an African gourd, a flask, sandals, a comb and a pillar.⁶⁶ He was especially concerned with the Taunton College School (the free grammar school founded by Bishop Fox in 1522) which after a long period of uncertainty had been re-established in 1855. Using historical evidence he successfully persuaded the Charity Commissioners in 1858 that pupils who were children of Dissenters should not be required to learn the catechism of the Church of England.⁶⁷ Other positions he held included chairman of the Management Committee of the Taunton and Somerset Hospital, a post he was occupying at his death. He qualified as a JP at the Spring Sessions in Wells in 1871.

The Taunton Waterworks Company was one organisation where Jones was able to put his geological knowledge to practical use. On 30 November 1857 the *Somerset County Gazette* carried an advertisement making the case for a public water

supply for Taunton, the case being supported by chemical analysis of possible sources. The proposal stimulated considerable discussion about the need for the new system and its cost and also questions about the proposed source above Blagdon on the Blackdowns.

This prompted a response from Jones laying before its readers 'a brief statement of what appears to me to be the real state of the matter, especially as it bears upon the objects and purposes of the Water-works Company'.⁶⁸ He supported the proposal with great satisfaction and outlined his conclusions on the quality and probable quantity of the 'article offered to (the consumers) by this company', based not only on his knowledge of the geology of the Blackdowns but also on his own analysis of the water. Not surprisingly he became a shareholder and a founding director of the company. On his return from France in 1868 he rejoined the board and became chairman in 1872, being re-appointed to the post shortly before his death.

Jones's political interests went back at least to his time in Glasgow when he joined the university's Liberal Association. Although he was not always active politically his letters give an occasional insight into his views, as in 1867 when he commented to Mr Badcock at the museum in Taunton about universal suffrage in France:

'I do not know what the extension of the suffrage may do in England but I earnestly hope it may not prove so destructive of liberty and freedom as the so-called universal suffrage in France. But our English men are made of better stuff I believe.'⁶⁹

His political views became clearer after his return from France and there was talk of his standing for Parliament.⁷⁰ He became president of the Taunton Working Men's Liberal Association and in his addresses to meetings, as at the Parade Assembly Rooms in 1870, set down his Liberal views with some force.⁷¹ His last public speech was to the Association in December 1872.

ARTHUR JONES'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS

This paper has concentrated on Arthur Jones as antiquarian and geologist and on his role in the Society, but a little should be said about his religious views. These two aspects of his life cannot be separated and Jones, in common with other contributors, included a reference to God as Creator in many of his papers to the Society, as when

discussing the geology around Dunster: 'The record is writ by the Almighty hand itself upon the rocky tablets of everlasting ages.'⁷²

Both Jones and his brother John feature in lists of Unitarian students at the Carmarthen College, but the Heol Awst chapel was not of that persuasion. In fact it was in the congregational tradition with Trinitarian tendencies, which led some Unitarians to move away and worship elsewhere in Carmarthen. However the congregations which Arthur Jones served later did generally consider themselves Unitarian although not necessarily under that name. Boundaries between different traditions seem to have been flexible.

Jones certainly considered himself to be a 'Christian' but his public stance on matters of faith did give rise to controversy. At the end of January 1861 an event was held at the Mary Street chapel which included speeches on the present state of Unitarianism. A 'discourse' by Jones, printed in the *Somerset County Gazette* on 2 February, provoked letters from 'Enquirer', 'A Wayfaring Man', 'A Lay Churchman' and 'A Well-wisher', and finally a response from Jones on 16 March. The debate focussed on what view Jones held of the divinity of Christ, an argument not made easier by his statement that while rejecting the Athanasian Creed he had no problems in accepting the earlier Apostles' Creed. The *Somerset County Gazette* in its tribute to him did comment that some people felt that towards the end of his life he was becoming more Trinitarian in his outlook, but this view was strongly refuted by his brother-in-law the Revd John Robberds.⁷³

Whatever his views he did get on with people of other religious traditions. As chairman of the hospital management committee he was keen that patients should have access to their own spiritual advisors whatever their denomination. He was often seen listening to speakers of other religious views. On a more practical front when he rented Silver Street House in South Road in the 1850s and 60s he had much contact with the adjoining Roman Catholic convent. The house had been acquired by the convent in the 1830s to provide it with a source of income. Jones's son recalled that it was 'a rather swank one where foreign Roman Catholic princesses etc went to school'. However its relations with the Jones family were good and 'the lady abbess [was] a great friend of father in spite of his being a Unitarian minister and consulted him frequently on business matters'.⁷⁴

LAST DAYS

On the last day of 1872 Jones wrote to William Sanford to wish him well for the new year, adding 'I have been under the doctor's care for some days – derangement of the digestive system. There are very few things as yet that I dare venture on in the way of meal-foods but I hope I have turned the corner. The attack has left me very weak'.⁷⁵ However despite the attention of several doctors Jones's condition worsened and his final painful days are recounted in letters from his eldest daughter Margaret to her Uncle William Blake. Jones died at his home in Taunton on 23 April, a few days short of his 55th birthday, a post mortem showing that he died of a 'cancerous tumor in ileum.' In addition to dealing with his estate of less than £5000 his will specified at length what should be done with heraldic shields and old armour that had been left to him by Edward Jarman, a relative of his wife Margaret.

The funeral took place at the Taunton cemetery on Wellington road (not at the Mary Street Chapel, presumably because of the number of mourners expected). The service was well attended with most local magistrates present as well as the two local MPs, who had come down from London specially. The service was conducted in accordance with Jones' wishes by his brother-in-law, John Robberds. He was buried with his wife in one of two now rather sad looking family graves at the cemetery.

The responses in Taunton to his death reflected the esteem with which Jones was held in different sections of the community. His daughter Margaret received many private and public tributes.⁷⁶ The *Somerset County Gazette* carried a long leading article. The *Taunton Courier* began its report of the funeral by saying that 'the grave has now closed over the mortal remains of one who in his life time exercised no inconsiderable influence over much which concerned many of the public institutions connected with Taunton'. After rehearsing the various contributions he had made to the town the paper went on to make a comment which suggests that he was not completely accepted as belonging to the town's 'establishment': 'Differing though he did from us most materially, both in his political and religious views, we willingly close the doors of controversy in the presence of the dead, and cordially recognise the sincerity of the former and the breadth of the latter'.⁷⁷

This hint of controversy was repeated when the question of a permanent monument to Jones arose.

On 13 December 1873 a notice appeared in the *Somerset County Gazette* under the heading of ‘The Jones Memorial’ inviting subscriptions from ‘those who desire to commemorate, independently of political objects, the various public services of the late Mr William Arthur Jones’. The sums collected would be put towards the founding of a scholarship or exhibition at the Taunton College School to be named after him. The notice was placed by the High Sheriff, F.H. Dickinson, E.A. Freeman, the Revd W. Hunt, Col Pinney, W.A. Sanford and W.E. Surtees (all members of the Society). A total of £35 had already been promised. The notice elicited a response from ‘TSP’(T.S. Penny?) who objected to the proposed scholarship asking ‘Was Mr Jones a Churchman?’ and ‘Did he take an interest in this above all other institutions in the town?’ A further letter from ‘A Churchman’ also questioned the proposal on the grounds that it was not appropriate for someone who rejected the divinity of Christ to be commemorated at a school that had been established in accordance with Church of England teachings. Mr Surtees submitted a response to these arguments, but whether the proposal succeeded has not been ascertained.

The Society’s own recognition of Jones’s contribution to its activities was more straightforward.⁷⁸ At the Annual Meeting in Wells on 19 August 1873 the President, William Sanford, paid tribute to his colleague and friend:

‘Mr Jones, by his unremitting attention, by his considerable ability, by his genial manners and general kindness, had done very much for the society, and his death would be a heavy and perhaps an irreparable loss, for it would be difficult to replace him.’

Jones’s successor as secretary, the Revd William Hunt, added his own tribute:

‘To a more than ordinary knowledge on general and archaeological subjects, and a scientifically cultured mind, which rendered him one of the most valuable officers that this Society ever had, Mr Jones added a kindness of heart and amenity of manner which endeared him to all who had the pleasure of knowing him, and those who knew him best lament him most.’

The idea of a permanent memorial inevitably arose. After the Wells meeting R. King Meade King suggested to William Blake that it might take the form of a simple monument in the cemetery or, far

better, a public drinking fountain in Taunton.⁷⁹ In the event a much more appropriate monument was chosen in the form of the sarsen stone from Staple Fitzpaine which still (in March 2009) stands in the Taunton Castle moat. About £120 was collected by Jones’s friends as a contribution to the £460 needed to buy ‘a dwelling house and garden with a large frontage to the river, extending to the outer moat and immediately adjoining the Castle garden’.⁸⁰

CONCLUSION

Arthur Jones was a major contributor to the development of the Society in its early days and a significant figure in Taunton’s civic life. He was a good family man and much appreciated as a minister by his congregations. As a geologist he could not be considered as in the same league as his friend Charles Moore, but his strength was a wide-ranging interest in natural history, history and archaeology which helped the Society to maintain its breadth of appeal.

Sources and acknowledgements

The most fruitful sources of information for this paper have been in the Somerset Record Office (the Farewell Jones papers (DD/FJ), the Sanford Archives (DD/SF), the Society’s papers (DD/SAS)), the Society’s *Proceedings* and the privately-owned Blake Archives. However my research has taken me in person to places as varied as West Wales, Northampton, London and the Pyrenees, and electronically to Canada, Scotland and Massachusetts. The paper would not have been possible without the help of many people, in particular W. Seymour Blake (great-grandson of Arthur Jones), the staff of the archives in Taunton, Carmarthen, Bridgend, Northampton and Pau, and Chantal Verdier of the Parc National des Pyrénées. I am grateful also for the guidance and encouragement I have received from Tom Mayberry and Prof Peter Haggett, and not least the help of my wife Sheila. My thanks are also due to the Maltwood Fund for a grant towards the cost of the research.

Abbreviations

BA	Blake Archives
BL	Bodleian Library

CRO	Carmarthen Record Office
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
SCG	Somerset County Gazette
SRO	Somerset Record Office
TC	Taunton Courier
WAJ	William Arthur Jones
WAS	William Ayshford Sanford
WB	William Blake

Endnotes

- ¹ Letters WAJ to WAS - 8.2.1867, 1.7.1867 - SRO DD/SF/7/6/138.
- ² The ODNB entry for Jones, originally written by his son G.F. Jones and revised by T.W. Mayberry, gives William Jones senior's occupation as corn merchant, but there is no evidence for this in the Heol Awst Chapel records which show clearly that he was a cooper.
- ³ See Gibbard, N., 2006. 'Heol Awst Congregational Church, 1703-1837', *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, 42, 5-17.
- ⁴ SRO DD/FJ 15. The SRO contains two diaries written by Jones: 'Diary of the fourth session' (at Carmarthen College) (DD/FJ 15) and a Glasgow diary (DD/FJ 16). It would be surprising if these were the only two that he wrote.
- ⁵ *SANH* 7, i, 22.
- ⁶ Possibly *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation*, by John Ray (1627-1705) first published in 1691.
- ⁷ See Yates entry in ONDB.
- ⁸ Letter WAJ to WB, 13.04.1841 - BA.
- ⁹ Crewkerne Chapel accounts - SRO D/N/crew/4/3/2.
- ¹⁰ Letter WAJ to WB 13.04.1841 - BA.
- ¹¹ See ONDB entries for George and Anne Baker.
- ¹² SRO DD/FJ 24.
- ¹³ Letter WAJ to WB 20.07.1843 - BA.
- ¹⁴ A photocopy of WAJ's passport is in SRO DD/FJ 17. Interestingly, but apparently not unusually for the time, it was issued by the Belgian consul in London and was combination of a passport and a visa.
- ¹⁵ Letter James Yates to WAJ 04.08.1843 - BA.
- ¹⁶ *Bridgwater Times* 17.12.1850.
- ¹⁷ SCG 22.02.1851.
- ¹⁸ SCG 28.08.1852.
- ¹⁹ SRO DD/FJ 32. A Memoire by WAJ's son John c. 1898 (In the SRO catalogue as G.F. Jones).
- ²⁰ *SANH* 5, i, 8.
- ²¹ *SANH* 7, i, 22. WAJ was a corresponding member of the International Association for Obtaining a Uniform System of Measures, Weights and Coins which published his paper as a pamphlet (in SRO DD/FJ 22).
- ²² As in WAS's paper on 'Glaciers' given to a *conversazione* on 14.11.59 and printed in the TC on 16.11.1859.
- ²³ Letters WAJ to Sir Thomas Phillips, in the Phillips-Robinson Collection - BL.
- ²⁴ *SANH* 13, 119-245.
- ²⁵ 'Necrology' of Brigham in *Collections of the Old Colony Historical Society*, Vol. 4, Taunton, Mass. 1889.
- ²⁶ Letters from Brigham to WAJ in 1856 - BA.
- ²⁷ *SANH* 1, i, 127-139.
- ²⁸ Letter WAJ to WAS 21.05.1860 - SRO DD/SF/7/6/150.
- ²⁹ *SANH* 10, 23.
- ³⁰ SCG 23.11.1861.
- ³¹ *SANH* 11, 33. See also SAHN 133, 57.
- ³² *SANH* 7, ii, 25-41.
- ³³ SRO DD/FJ 22.
- ³⁴ Letter Beard to WAS(?) DD/SAS c.1193/54.
- ³⁵ *SANH* 12, 62.
- ³⁶ *SANH* 9, ii, 151.
- ³⁷ Letter Brooke to WAJ 8.07.1871 - BA.
- ³⁸ *SANH* 18, 71.
- ³⁹ Letter WAJ to WAS - SRO DD/SF 3639.
- ⁴⁰ Letter WAJ to Mary Street congregation 2.10.1866 - BA.
- ⁴¹ The British interest in the Pyrenees is examined in detail (in French) in: a. Duloum, Joseph, c. 1970: 'Les Anglais dans les Pyrénées et les Debuts du Tourisme Pyrénéen (1739-1896)', *Les Amis du Musée Pyrénéen*, Lourdes. b. Tucoo-Chala, P., 1999: *Pau Ville Anglaise*, Librairie des Pyrénées et de Gascogne.
- ⁴² Pers. comm. Dr Robert Dunning.
- ⁴³ National Trust exhibition, Tyntesfield.
- ⁴⁴ Baedeker South of France 6th edn 1914.
- ⁴⁵ Letter from EA Freeman to WAJ 08.09.1867 - SRO DD/FJ 19.
- ⁴⁶ 'Necrologie' of Lyte in the *Bulletin de la Société Ramond*, 1906. For more details of Lyte's work see Saule-Sorbé, H., 2004. 'Les Pyrénées Photographiées de Farnham Maxwell Lyte', *Bulletin de la Société Ramond*, 103-29.
- ⁴⁷ *SANH* (24.3.56) 7, i, 22, reported in SCG 29.03.1856.
- ⁴⁸ There is no mention of Welman's paper on the Pyrenees in the Society's *Proceedings*, but a full

- report was given in the SCG on 27.01.1862.
- 49 For a more detailed account of Jones's stay in Argelès see the paper (in French) by the author and M-P Mengelle in 'Lavedan et Pays Toys No. 38, 2007' (in the SANHS library).
- 50 *SANH* 14, ii, 103–60.
- 51 Letter WAJ to WAS 01.07.1867 - SRO SD/SF/7/6/138. The isard (*Rupicapra pyrenaica*) is a small Pyrenean mountain goat.
- 52 *Bulletin de Société Ramond* Vol. 1.
- 53 Martins, C., and Collomb, E., 1868. *Essai sur l'ancien glacier de la vallée d'Argelès*, Boehm & Fils Imprimeurs de l'Académie, Montpellier.
- 54 SRO DD/FJ 32. The desman (*Galemys pyrenaicus*) is a rare aquatic mammal that is also nocturnal and therefore difficult to see. The mole is its closest cousin.
- 55 SRO DD/FJ 22.
- 56 Letter WAJ to WAS 14.02.1868 - SRO DD/SF/7/6/138.
- 57 Letter WAJ to WAS 05.06.1869 - SRO DD/SF/7/6/138.
- 58 Letter WAJ to WAS 01.07.1867 - SRO DD/SF/7/6/138.
- 59 *SANH* 17, i, 73.
- 60 Letter WAJ to WAS 05.06.1869 - SRO DD/SF/7/6/138.
- 61 Letter Hunt to WAS (?) 29.07.1869 - SRO DD/SF/7/6/138.
- 62 *SANH* 15, 37.
- 63 *SANH* 16, i, 2.
- 64 *SANH* 18, i, 3.
- 65 TC 26.11.1873.
- 66 SCG 25.11.1865.
- 67 SRO DD/FJ 18.
- 68 SCG 5.12.1857.
- 69 Letter WAJ to Badcock 10.08.1867 - SRO DD/SAS c.1193/61.
- 70 Letter E.A. Freeman to WAJ - SRO DD/FJ19.
- 71 SCG 17.12.1870.
- 72 *SANH* 6, i, 138.
- 73 SCG 03.05.1873.
- 74 SRO DD/FJ 32
- 75 Letter WAJ to WAS 31.12.1872 - SRO DD/SF/7/6/138.
- 76 SRO DD/FJ 24.
- 77 TC 30.04.1873.
- 78 *SANH* 19, i, 2&4.
- 79 Letter R. King Meade King to WB 11.09.1873 - BA.
- 80 *SANH* 22, i, 3–4.