

Ceremonial opening of the new Museum of Practical Geology and offices of the Geological Survey of Great Britain 1935

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[Jump to navigation](#) [Jump to search](#)

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NEW MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSINGTON: *Interior View*

Museum of Practical Geology, South Kensington: Interior. Plate XII.



NEW MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSINGTON: *Exterior View*

Museum of Practical Geology, South Kensington: Exterior. Plate XII.

The ceremonial opening of the new Museum of Practical Geology and offices of the Geological Survey of Great Britain by His Royal Highness The Duke Of York, K.G.

[List of delegates](#)

On 3rd July, 1935, His Royal Highness The Duke Of York presided over the Opening Ceremony. He was received at the door of the Museum by the Mayor and Mayoress of Kensington and was accompanied to the platform by

Lord Rutherford of Nelson, O.M., Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research; The Right Honourable W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, P.C., M.P., First Commissioner of H.M. Office of Works;

Sir Frank Smith, K.C.B., Secretary of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research;

Sir Patrick Duff, K.C.B., Secretary of H.M. Office of Works;

Mr. J. H. Markham, F.R.I.B.A., Archited of the Museum;

Sir John S. Flett, K.B.E., F.R.S., Director of the Geological Survey and Museum;

Mr. W. F. P. McLintock, D.Sc., Curator of the Museum.

A platform was specially erected at the east end of the new Museum and seating had been provided for an audience of over 1000 on the main floor and on the first gallery.

Mr. Ormsby-Gore addressed His Royal Highness as follows:

May it please Your Royal Highness: The Building which Your Royal Highness is honouring to-day is the new home provided by the Nation for the Geological Survey of Great Britain and the Museum of Practical Geology. The Geological Survey of Great Britain is the oldest national geological survey in the world, and the Centenary of its active existence is about to be celebrated. It was instituted for the purpose of preparing copies of the Ordnance Survey maps geologically coloured so as to be of service to science and industry by providing an accurate representation of the geology of Great Britain. The Museum of Practical Geology developed out of the collection by the Survey of specimens of rocks, minerals, and fossils, and was first opened to the Public in 1841. It was soon found that the importance of the collection warranted the erection of a building designed to display the work of the Survey and the application of geology to the arts and industry and, in the year of the Great Exhibition, the building in Jermyn Street was opened by Your Royal Highness's Great-grandfather, Prince Albert.

It is of interest to note that the site of the new building in which we are now assembled is part of the land which was purchased by the Government from the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851, by whom it was made available, by the inspiration and under the wise guidance of the Prince Consort, for purposes connected with Science and the Arts. During the period of more than eighty years' occupation of the old building, the Museum expanded and became cramped by limitation of space. Toward the end of its life the structural condition of the building deteriorated rapidly, until in 1928 the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries described the condition as 'quite deplorable and indeed dangerous.' The new building was commenced in 1929 and was substantially completed in 1933, when it was required for the Monetary and Economic Conference which was held in that year. The cost of the building is some £220,000, and a lease of the Crown Site of the old building has, I understand, been granted at a rent which considerably exceeds the interest on the capital sum

expended on the new building. The arrangement of the Museum is in accordance with the best modern Museum practice. The gallery or exhibition space, on three floors, has been treated with simplicity of form and finish in order that the interest of visitors may be concentrated on the exhibits. The maximum intensity of natural light has been secured and special consideration has been given to the provision of the most modern forms of artificial lighting. A top floor will be devoted solely to research by the staff of the Survey and by students. New offices and laboratories and suitable accommodation for the Library and Map Collection have been provided at the west end of the building for the Geological Survey.

The building has been designed by an Architect on the staff of H.M. Office of Works, and the main elevation expresses in a fitting manner the importance of the Museum, and I think the design is fully worthy of comparison with the other great museum buildings on neighbouring sites.

I have the honour to thank Your Royal Highness for your presence here to-day and to ask Your Royal Highness to be pleased to declare the building open.

His Royal Highness The Duke Of York made the following reply:

I thank you for the kind and loyal expressions which you have used in extending to me the welcome of His Majesty's Office of Works on this occasion this after-noon.

I consider it a great privilege to be here to-day and to accept this fine Building from your Department and to dedicate it for the use of the Geological Survey of Great Britain as its future home.

I congratulate the Architect, the Contractors, and all concerned in the design and execution of the work. This structure makes a notable and welcome addition to the great and distinguished group of Museums erected on the land provided for the encouragement of Science, Arts, and Industry, by the wise foresight of His Royal Highness The Prince Consort. With the Science Museum on one side, and the British Museum (Natural History) on the other, it provides a suite of exhibits of Science which cannot be excelled in any other country.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, in 1683, His Royal Highness The Duke of York opened the old Ashmolean Building at Oxford, which contained, I understand, the first collection of British Geological exhibits.

One hundred years ago, primarily as a result of the energetic work and advocacy of Sir Henry De la Beche, the Geological Survey of Great Britain was founded, the first official organization of its kind. Today, there are more than 120 official Geological Surveys in different parts of the world, and for many of them, and especially for those in other lands which form part of the British Commonwealth of Nations, the Geological Survey of Great Britain has been a pattern. I am glad to know that amongst those here present are many who have come to this country from abroad to celebrate the Centenary of the Survey and to pay their tribute to its work.

In the minds of all British and many foreign Geologists the Geological Survey of Great Britain is inseparably associated with the old Museum of Practical Geology in Jermyn Street. For eighty-five years that building was a great and famous centre of Geological Science in which Geologists, Mining Engineers; and Metallurgists pursued the studies which enabled them later

to contribute to the development of the mineral resources of every part of the world. From today the Geological world will think of the Survey in association with this fine new building, which cannot fail to give new inspiration to all who work and study in it.

This Museum, with the Geological Survey, serves many purposes. The work of the Survey has provided, and is providing year by year, a mass of knowledge indispensable to the welfare of the great Mining interests of our country, to Agriculture, to Public Health and Town Planning, and to a great variety of Industries on which our economic prosperity depends. In this building the results of that work are recorded and displayed in a wealth of specimens drawn from the whole country. The Museum supplies valuable facilities for the student and research worker in Geology; and last, but by no means least, as I look around me I can see that it will not fail to capture the interest and engage the intellectual attention of the layman, and to demonstrate to him that Geology is a living Science which touches at many points the everyday life of himself and his fellow citizens.

I congratulate the Curator and Staff of the Museum on the success with which they have accomplished the difficult task of transferring from Jermyn Street the vast number of individual exhibits.

In this new building, the Geological Survey of Great Britain will have an opportunity of continuing and enlarging its public services. I know that it will justify the encouragement which it has received, and I wish it a full measure of success in the future.

It gives me great pleasure to declare the Museum open.

The following gentlemen, including the Architect and the principal officials of H.M. Office of Works and representatives of the contractors who had erected and equipped the building were then presented to His Royal Highness:

Mr. John S. Galbraith (Managing Director, Messrs. Galbraith Brothers, Ltd.).

Mr. Arnold Statham (Managing Director, Messrs. Banister, Waston & Co., Ltd.).

Mr. E. Harrison (General Foreman).

Mr. William Wharram (Ganger).

Mr. N. Sizer, M.C., A.M.I.E.E. (Assistant Engineer, H.M. Office of Works).

Mr. Ralph S. C. Ball (Director, Messrs. Read and Partners, Ltd.).

Mr. Charles E. W. Buck (Assistant Technical Officer, H.M. Office of Works).

Mr. Charles C. Regnart (Director, Messrs. Maple & Co., Ltd.).

Sir Valentine G. Crittall, J.P. (Chairman, Crittall Manufacturing Co., Ltd.), was unavoidably absent through illness.

The Chairman and Members of the Geological' Survey Board were then presented to His Royal Highness:

Mr. T. Franklin Sibly, D.Sc., LL.D. (Chairman).

Professor C. G. Cullis, D.Sc.

Sir Thomas H. Holland, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S.

Sir Edwin H. Pascoe, Sc.D., D.Sc.

Mr. J. Romanes, M.A.

Professor A. C. Seward, Sc.D., LL.D., F.R.S.

Also Mr. W. H. Worgan, General Foreman of the Museum.

Having pronounced the Museum open to the public, His Royal Highness was conducted round the exhibits on the first and second floors by Lord Rutherford, Sir John Flett and Dr. W. F. P. McLintock, the Curator. He expressed his approval of the general plan of the building and paid close attention to many of the exhibits.

After His Royal Highness had departed, those present had an opportunity of inspecting the building and the objects which were on exhibition. Tea was served in the library, the demonstration room and on the first gallery. The Museum closed at 6 p.m.

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Category:

- [History of the British Geological Survey](#)

Navigation menu

Personal tools

- Not logged in
- [Talk](#)
- [Contributions](#)
- [Log in](#)
- [Request account](#)

Namespaces

- [Page](#)
- [Discussion](#)

□

Variants

Views

- [Read](#)
- [Edit](#)
- [View history](#)
- [PDF Export](#)

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Search

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- [Main page](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Random page](#)
- [Help about MediaWiki](#)

Tools

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Page information](#)
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