

Strahan, SIR Aubrey (1852-1928), geologist, was born on 20 April 1852 in London, the younger son of William Strahan (1807-1866; formerly Snow, who changed his name in 1831), a banker (until convicted of fraud in 1855), of Blackmore Hall, Sidmouth, and his wife Elizabeth Anne Dorothea (b. 1816), only daughter of General (Sir) George Bulteel Fisher, KCH, (*fl.* 1782-1834), commandant of Woolwich Garrison (1827-34). Educated at Eton College (1865-70) and St. John's College, Cambridge (1870-5), Strahan obtained a third class in the natural sciences tripos (1874) and took his BA (1875), MA (1878), and Sc.D. (1907).

St John's was an active centre of geological work and this decided Strahan to join the Geological Survey of England and Wales. He was appointed temporary assistant geologist in 1875. Between 1875 and 1890 he revised earlier geological mapping in many parts of Britain. Structural geology was his favourite area of investigation throughout his career and his field mapping was excellent. In 1891 the director, (Sir) Archibald Geikie, appointed him to undertake a complete revision of the geology of the south Wales coalfield and by 1893 Strahan had five geologists working under him. When (Sir) Jethro Teall became director in 1901, Strahan was appointed district geologist in charge of the south Wales region. In 1903 he joined the royal commission on the coal supplies of Great Britain (1901-5). His work did much to promote recognition of the importance of concealed coal deposits. In 1909 he was appointed assistant to the director of the Geological Survey and, when Teall retired in 1914, Strahan succeeded him.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Strahan supervised the preparation of a set of vital military geological maps of Belgium and other war zones; and with the cessation of foreign sources of supply an exhaustive inventory of native sources of strategic minerals (ranging from barytes to sand) was needed. This led to the publication of the special reports on the mineral resources of Great Britain which, together with the thirteen memoirs on the geology of the south Wales coalfield (1899-1921, all edited by Strahan, by then author or co-author of 45 memoirs and 15 shorter articles), established him, as one of the foremost British economic geologists. He retired to Reading in July 1920, moving from 12 Marlowes Road, Kensington, London, where he had lived (when not in the field) since 1888.

Strahan's contemporaries thought of him as a very successful administrator and organiser, finding him shrewd, diligent, methodical and impartial. Although his manner appeared reserved on first meeting, he could be a genial, friendly, and charming companion. His interests included archaeology and photography.

He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1903 and served on its council (1921-3). He also served as president of the Geological Society (1912-14); president, section C (geology) of the British Association (1904); and vice-president, International Geological Congress (1913). He was appointed KBE in 1919, partly in recognition of his services during the war years, and was also awarded the Wollaston medal of the Geological Society (1919) and an honorary LLD (Toronto).

In 1886 he married Fanny Evelyn Margaret (1851-1926), daughter of Edward Henry Roscoe, gentleman, of Chester and his wife Fanny Catherine (née Parry). They had one son. Strahan died of heart failure, 4 March 1928 at Fairfield, near Reading, Berkshire and was buried at Stratley Church, near Goring, Berkshire.

Richard J. Howarth

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