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OBITUARY

PROF. ALBERT GILLIGAN
GEOLOGICAL WORK IN LEEDS

32 YEARS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Professor Albert Gilligan, who retired a fortnight ago from the Chair of Geology in the University of Leeds, died suddenly yesterday, aged 66. Announcement of his pending retirement under the age limit was made last May. Less than month later met with an accident at Whitby, and had to spend several weeks in hospital. While walking along a path he fell and fractured a thigh. On leaving hospital he did not return to his home Horsforth, near Leeds, but went live for the time being at New Close, Storth, where he died. His death will a shock his former colleagues, for he was making a good recovery from his accident, and only a few days ago a friend in Leeds received from him letter In which he indicated good spirits and wrote that he was able, with care, to move about again.

Professor Gilligan was a member of the University staff for more than 30 years, and his geological research work attracted wide notice, abroad as well as in the British Isles. He was Professor of Geology in the University Leeds from 1922, having succeeded Professor P. F. Kendall, to whom he had been assistant for nine years.

Yorkshire Rock Investigation

From Wolverhampton Grammar School he went to University College, Cardiff, where he specialised in geology, and after graduating in the University of Wales he was for a time on the staff of Glossop Technical School before being appointed demonstrator and assistant lecturer in the Geological Department of Leeds University in 1907. Continuing his studies in Leeds, he became successively M.Sc. and D.Sc., and was afterwards appointed Reader of Economic Geology and then of Petrology.

To the literature of metallurgy and the geology of metallic areas made important contributions, but his principal scientific reputation rested on his studies of the Millstone Grit. While in Wales he studied the Millstone Grit of the Welsh border, and on moving to Yorkshire he turned his attention to the Yorkshire grits, speedily to find that they were entirely different origin and material from the Welsh beds.

Of the Yorkshire rocks he made a profound study, and his paper on the subject published about four years ago, was pronounced by a high geological authority as "the finest work of the kind ever done in this country." For this thesis he was granted the Doctorate of Science of Leeds University, and recognition of his research work generally the Geological Society of London, of which was a Fellow, awarded him the Murchison Fund 1920.

American Interest

In America, particularly, the paper attracted wide notice, and it brought the author numerous inquiries on technical questions. The method pursued by Dr Gilligan was to identify microscopically, and by the determination of specific gravity, the nature of the material of the grains the grit and of other rocks, and to deduce therefrom the sources of the material of the grit and of kindred rocks. With this patient work went a restrained imagination which reached most important and illuminating conclusions as to the ancient physiography of the North-West of Europe and America.

Dr. Gilligan also gained a wide reputation as an exponent of science to popular audiences. For many years he was a member the Museums Sub-Committee of Leeds City Council, and with his active co-operation the scope and interest of the Museum was extended to the benefit of all.

As a staff member the Union Committee of the University he was closely concerned with the development of student activities, especially in athletics, and he contributed in no small measure to friendly relations between staff and students. Outside bodies which received his support and interest included the Yorkshire Geological Society, the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union and the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. He was also local secretary for the British Association meeting in Leeds in 1927, and for many years he was Honorary Curator the Cecil Duncombe Observatory. He did much to foster the study of astronomy. Professor Gilligan has left widow, one son and one daughter.

An Appreciation

Dr H C Versey, Senior Lecturer in Geology in the University of Leeds, a student and colleague for 25 years, gave the following appreciation of Professor Gilligan to a representative of "The Yorkshire Post" last night:-

Professor Gilligan has left behind him as a result of his 30 years' life in Yorkshire, a tradition of unstinted service to the University of Leeds. As an investigator in the realm of pure geology he will be remembered principally for his work on the Millstone Grit of West Yorkshire, which stands out as real pioneer work in the modern study of sedimentary rocks.

This work was marked by clear appreciation of the necessity of detailed study, but the details were not allowed to mask the broad results of the Investigation. A similar verdict may be passed on his study the deposit on Rothwell Haigh, where his findings are only now being appreciated at their true value.

Professor Gilligan was perhaps better known to the general public an exponent of science to popular audiences, where his clear voice and vigorous style made him in great demand, and he gave very freely his time to such work. He always regarded the popularising of science as one of the most important functions of a University Don. Comparable with this activity was his service the Museums Committee the City Council: and the recent Improvement in the lay-out of the Museum owed much to his initiative and interest.

As professor, he always preserved the dignity of his office, but behind this there was a kindness and humanity which enabled all students to discuss their difficulties with him. The indebtedness of students to Professor Gilligan can never be publicly assessed, and many of them will mourn a very dear and true friend.