

Rudler's Irish map

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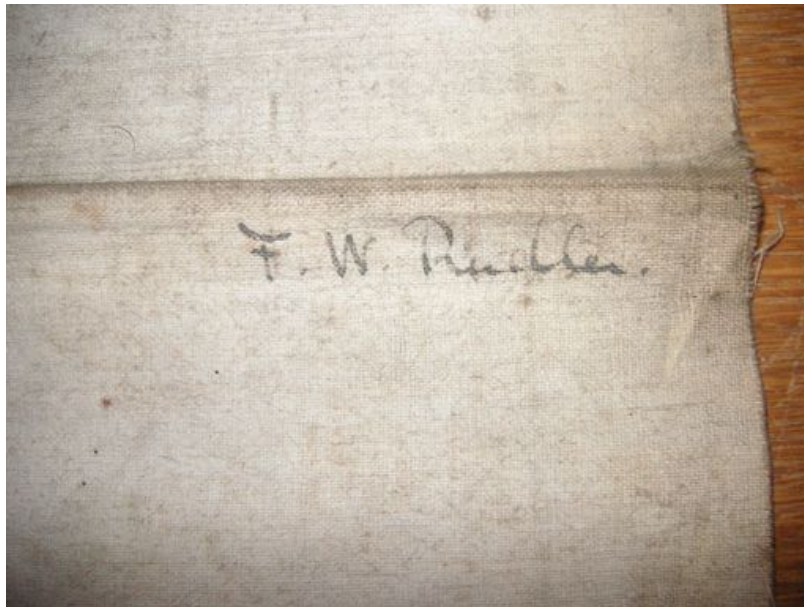
I am sure that geology remains an enduring fascination for many Aber geologists – even if careers have taken off in other directions. One aspect that has provided me with much interest has been the collection and study of early geological maps – which sometimes turn out to have significance more than just the map itself and website visitors might be interested to learn about one of those instances that connects with Aber geologists.

Richard Griffith published the first geological map of Ireland in 1838 in a parliamentary report on the development of railways in Ireland. A year later he issued a larger version of the map at a scale of a quarter inch to the mile (1:253,440), priced at 20 shillings. In 1853 he reissued the map at a much-reduced scale of 9/16 inch = ten miles (1:1,126,400) to accompany an instruction book for 'Valuators' who were engaged on a detailed survey of the value of every property in Ireland (for tax assessment purposes). In his 'day job', Griffith was 'Commissioner of Valuation' overseeing the land use survey. I came across a copy of the 1853 map for sale on the internet, described as "in six sections, good condition but edges frayed, colours bright and wrapped in a grubby linen cloth with inked copperplate title and signature of owner". I went ahead with the purchase.



The 1853 Geological Map of Ireland by Richard Griffith

Now for the surprise.....the signature turned out to read "F.W.Rudler". As an Aber geologist I immediately recognized this as the same F.W. Rudler, after whom the Rudler Club was named.



Rudler's signature on the map

Born in 1840, Rudler started his geological career in 1861 as Assistant Curator in the Museum of Practical Geology in London (part of the Geological Survey). In 1876 he left to take up a post at UCW Aberystwyth but resigned in 1879 to return to London and the staff of the survey as Curator, librarian and keeper of the Royal School of Mines and Museum of Practical Geology.

After his death in 1915 his personal collection was purchased by the College on the recommendation of O.T. Jones. In his book on the history of geology at Aber, Antony Wyatt recounts how it was thought that Rudler's collection was donated and as a result (some years later), it was thought it would be fitting that the student geological society should be named after him. So came into being the Rudler connection that led to my recognizing who was the original owner of the Griffith 1853 map!



Portrait of FW Rudler, not dated, but taken in his younger years (probably not long before his appointment to UCW Aberystwyth)

Source: BGS Asset Bank [Special collections/](#) Survey staff photographs. Geological Survey and Museum and Royal School of Mines, 1850-1910. IGS1.639 P575807. NERC copyright.

The Griffith map, which cost 3/6d, would have been affordable to the young Rudler. Another, larger scale (1:506,680), map by J. Beete-Jukes, which could be purchased as a folded 'pocket book' issue, was published by Edward Stanford in 1867 but this was priced at 30 shillings. So, either Rudler purchased his Griffith map before that date or could he not afford the Stanford map.

I have no idea if Rudler ever took this map to Ireland although its condition suggests it was well used, for although it is generally in good condition, there is some light rubbing showing on the map. Rudler was an active member of the British Association for the Advancement of Science who met in Belfast in 1874 and Dublin in 1878, but his name does not appear in any of the reports for those meetings so it is speculation to suggest he used the map on his journey to the 1878 meeting from Aberystwyth, but it is feasible.

It seems curious that this map didn't get into the Rudler Collection that was purchased by the College, as this included a vast range of specimens as well as letters, lecture notes, books and periodicals and reprints so it seems reasonable to suggest his maps should have been in the collection also (only some of the written material now survive in archives held in the Hugh Owen Library). Anthony Wyatt notes 'The whereabouts of some of the collections are now unknown...' but I have traced the post-Rudler ownership of this map, which may shed a little light on the matter.

I made contact with the seller to ask if any information on the previous whereabouts or provenance of the map was known. The reply was better than I expected. It turns out to have belonged to the seller's father, who was a geography and geology teacher called Arthur Richard Sansbury, and who, in 1913 as a child aged 10, had moved to Aberystwyth. Arthur's father, a bookseller from the Isle of Wight, bought a partnership in Galloway's University Booksellers on Pier Street (sadly no longer in business) and the family became established in Aberystwyth. It seems that Arthur did well at school and in 1926, aged 18, he was appointed as a laboratory assistant in the Geology Department under W.P. Pugh. Recognising Arthur's good qualifications, Pugh wanted to pay him a starting salary of 15 shillings a week, but the College would only agree to pay 10 shillings! However, Arthur must have also done well in his job, as he was eventually given his back pay and after two years (in 1928) his pay went up to 20 shillings. In that same year, Arthur shifted his status in the Department to become a student and he went on to graduate with a 2.1 honours degree in geology from the College in 1931 (the only recorded honours graduate in geology that year).



Arthur Sansbury in 1932 (aged 24) - photo taken a year after he graduated from Aberystwyth.

After a year of teaching in Wales, Arthur took up a post as a Geography teacher in Eastleigh County Secondary School (which, in 1957, became Barton Peveril Grammar School) in Hampshire. He remained there for the rest of his career, retiring in 1974. His former pupils remember him as a strict disciplinarian with a 'traditional' teaching style, but he also had a sense of humor when called for and his efforts to

organise regular field trips for pupils are still appreciated. In his lessons with the sixth form, he always included geology whenever the slightest opportunity gave him license. He died in 1986.

Arthur was an enthusiast and curious about all manner of things, which made him an avid collector of rocks and any other interesting 'objects' that seemed to come his way, He rarely discarded the artefacts he acquired, and it is perhaps this acquisitive trait that helps explain the existence of Rudler map.

One explanation could be that the map had been laying around in the Department some 50 years since Rudler's time. However, it is more likely to have arrived as part of the Rudler collection 'donated' in 1915 and by the late 1920s may have been placed in a drawer or on a shelf with other pieces of the collection somehow considered less important, so becoming rather 'neglected' and perhaps gathering dust. It is not difficult to imagine young Arthur being given the map, or him 'rescuing' it, when some of the collection material was being cleared out (as seems to have happened at some stage). Its 'used' and 'loose sheet' state would have likely made it a candidate for discard.

Arthur had a collection of maps in his study at home, and the Griffith map was tucked away in a desk drawer, being re-discovered when the family house was cleared following the death of his wife in 2011. His family has no recollection of him ever having visited Ireland, so the map may have been admired and studied from time to time but it is likely to have remained much the same as when Rudler possessed it.

What is certain is that the map has had three owners, but the full story of how Rudler's Irish map was first acquired and then 'handed down' can be only reasonably supposed. However, I feel certain it would be gratifying to both F.W. Rudler and A.R. Sansbury that in its current home is it is appreciated as belonging to two former Aber geologists and, by serendipity, it is now in the possession and care of a third former Aber geologist!

Acknowledgements:

For details of Rudler and much more on the history of Aber geology, see Antony Wyatt's excellent book 'A turbid tale: geology at Aberystwyth' (2000) to which I am indebted for much of the above information. I am also very grateful to Judith Carrie, Arthur Sansbury's daughter, who provided key information on her father together with the photo of him.