

July 1846: Strickland's invitation to the first meeting of the Cotswold Club

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Abstract

Sir Thomas Tancred, the first Secretary and Editor of the Cotswold Club, wrote two letters to Hugh Strickland which have been discovered in the latter's archives. These reveal a little about the early days of the Field Club, and also a few snippets of general history: they are published here for the first time.

The Cotteswold (or Cotswold) Naturalists' Club was founded on 7 July 1846. In its structure it followed the example of the Berwickshire Club in 1832, of which Prudeaux John Selby (1788-1867) was an active member. When his son-in-law Sir Thomas Tancred (1808-1880), 7th Baronet of Boroughbridge, moved to Stratton near Cirencester, the idea of a club of people interested in various branches of natural history came up. The idea was supported by two members of the University of Oxford, Charles Giles Bridle Daubeny (1795-1867), Professor of Chemistry and Hugh Edwin Strickland (1811-1853), Deputy Reader in Geology, as well as by some professors of the Agricultural College at Cirencester founded in 1845 (Jardine 1858: ccliii).

It may be interesting to put on record two letters which refer to the first meeting of the Cotswold Naturalists' Club. They are found among the correspondence left by H.E. Strickland, since 1867 preserved at the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, together with his ornithological collection (Strickland Archives: English Correspondence, 1416 and 1417).

The first letter (no. 1417) by Sir Thomas Tancred to Hugh Strickland predates the founding date by just three days, bearing witness to the speed of postal communication in the 1840s. Tancred wrote as follows (sig. 1):

"Stratton, Cirencester

July 4 / 46.

Dr Sir, Dr Daubeny informs me that he will mention that the Cotswold Club proposes to meet to form itself at the Black Horse Inn at Birdlip on Tuesday

July 7 at 9 A.M. - I write however because I fear I said to Dr Daubeny Brinscombe by mistake, instead of Birdlip, & to inform you that the latter is the place of meeting. Also would you kindly inform Dr Daubeny that if he can reach Birdlip by a later train, so as to arrive in the course of the day we will excuse his being at breakfast, as we have a long walk to make in Cranham woods, where some disputed points of Geology are to be settled, & there is good Botanising & entomology. I hope you will manage to come with Dr Daubeny (or the evening before as far as convenient) as the great western would bring you here, & it is only 10 miles to drive a gig; or you could get within 7 miles if you went to Stroud or Gloucester but uphill & bad road from latter. - Hoping to see you both by dinner time at any rate at Birdlip.

Yours very truly, Thos. Tancred.

P.S. Selby Esq. will be there."

The meeting obviously was to be an excursion into the countryside as well as formal discussion at the Inn to formalize the existence of the Club. Tancred was elected Honorary Secretary. It is not certain if Strickland actually attended the meeting. In any case, two days later Tancred wrote to him with the information of his election as a member (archive no. 1416, sig. 2):

"Cirencester

July 9 / 46

Dear Sir. I have the pleasure of informing you that you were elected a Member of the Cotswold Naturalists' Club at their first meeting at Birdlip on Tuesday last the 7th Inst:

I am yours very truly, Thomas Tancred, Hon.

1417

Strickland to the general Naturalists, and to
such dealers as bring you live, & it is only
in winter to obtain a gift: or
you can get within your limits
that the winter mountain
birds are to be had from the -
but the winter birds
are not to be had
at present & you shall
not be able to have them at
present as they are
not to be had from the
winter in time for
a gift. - I will however

Figure 1. First and last page of letter by Thomas Tancred to Hugh Strickland on 4 July 1846 about the first meeting of the Cotteswold Club (University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, Strickland Archives, no. 1417).

1916
Concert
July 9th
Dear Mr. Mayor
I hope you will give
me permission to speak
at the election. I would like
to speak at the election
and thank you for
the opportunity.

Figure 2. Letter by Thomas Tander to Hugh Edwin Strickland (University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, Strickland Archives, no. 1416).

Secretary

[To] H.E. Strickland Esq., 12 Merton St., Oxford."

Strickland was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable naturalist, who enjoyed geologizing in the field whenever he had an opportunity. According to the biography written after his early death by his father-in-law Sir William Jardine (1858: ccliii), Strickland gave three open-air lectures to members of the Cotteswold Club, sometimes combined with delegates of the Berwickshire and Tyneside (founded in 1846) Clubs. The first address was delivered at Painswick Beacon, the second at Stinchcombe Hill, while the last assembled a small crowd on the summit of Ragged Stone Hill near Eastnor.

Finally, in a letter written by Tancred to Strickland on 23 January 1850, there is reference to a paper about the geology of Leckhampton Hill, proposed to be printed by the Club in their Proceedings. There is no indication that this ever happened, but a summary of the contribution appeared in 1850 in one of the early volumes of the *Journal of the Geological Society of London* (Strickland 1850).

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References

Jardine, W. 1858. *Memoirs of Hugh Edwin Strickland, M.A., Fellow of the Royal, Linnean, Geological and Royal Geographical Societies, etc. etc., Deputy Reader of Geology in Oxford*. London: John van Voorst.

Strickland, H.E. 1850. Notes on a section of Leckhampton Hill. *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, 6: 249.