The Rev. Thomas Taylor Lewis M.A. (1801-1858)

Baptised: Ludlow 26 January 1801
Died: Ross on Wye 1858

The Reverend Thomas Taylor Lewis M.A. (1801-1858)

1. Introduction

The Reverend Thomas Taylor Lewis was a pioneer in the investigation of the geology of North Herefordshire and South Shropshire to the extent that he had already worked out the sequence of formations underlying the Old Red Sandstone prior to Murchison's visit to the area in 1831. Murchison had been advised to consult with Lewis about the *'curious fossils in slatey limestone.'* He did so - and made use of the knowledge gained in his magnum opus *The Silurian System* this with minimal acknowledgement to the discoveries made by Lewis.

'Lewis of Aymestry did more than ever Murchison did in Siluria' MSS marginalia dated June 3, 1897 by R. H. Newill.

2. The Lewis Family

Thomas Taylor Lewis, the third son of Edward and Ann Lewis nee George, was born in Ludlow. He was baptised at St Laurence on the 26th January 1801. Edward Lewis was a master butcher with premises in Broad Street – he was the son of Thomas Lewis a cooper of Corve Street. Ann George was the daughter of James George, a gentleman of Caynham.

Lewis was first educated at Cheam School in Surrey under the Reverend James Welchin. He was then admitted to St John's College, Cambridge as a pensioner where he obtained a B.A. degree in 1825 and proceeded to M.A. in 1828. While at Cambridge he attended a course of lectures given by the newly-appointed Woodwardian Professor of Geology, the Reverend Adam Sedgwick, which no doubt encouraged him to take up an interest in geology. That the son of a butcher of Ludlow was sent to school in Cheam and then completed his education at Cambridge is explained by the gifting of a sum of £4000 from an uncle, a brother of Ann George.

Yatton Court (TuckDB Postcards)

After graduation Thomas Lewis married Eliza Penfold in Cheam in 1827. The couple settled in Aymestry, to the north-west of Ludlow where he had been appointed curate in 1826. Eliza Lewis died soon after the birth of her daughter Grace Katherine in 1827. Lewis married again in 1838 to Elizabeth Jane Woodhouse Ferguson, the daughter of Rear Admiral George Ferguson RN of Yatton Court, Aymestry - the admiral was not in favour of the marriage of his daughter to a poor curate

Elizabeth Ferguson was born in Ludlow when, the then Captain, Ferguson, was living in Mill Street. After the death of her father she took residence at Yatton Court together with Lewis, Grace, Catherine and the three daughters of this second marriage; Agnes Woodhouse, Alice Woodhouse and Edith.

Yatton Court was previously the home of Elizabeth's ancestor John Woodhouse, a Herefordshire landowner, Governor of Bridewell and Bethlehem Hospitals and a director of the East India Company.

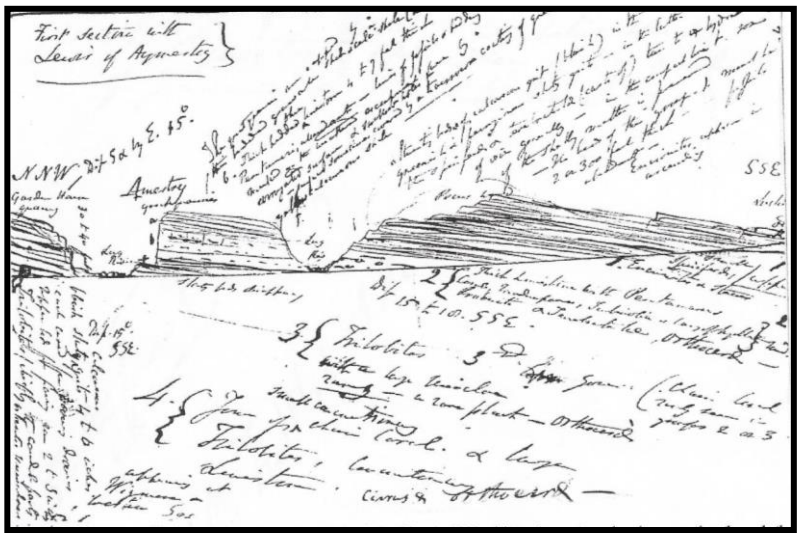
On his first arrival at Aymestry in 1827 Lewis '*zealously collected fossils which were everywhere in abundance strewn over the roads and fields*' together with fossils from the local quarries and cliff sections '*arranging them in his cabinet according to the strata in which he had found them*'. He was thus able by 1829 to trace the formations below the Old Red Sandstone throughout much of this district from '*Aymestry towards Ludlow as far as Elton and Richard's Castle, east of the River Teme to Caynham, and around Downton and Leintwardine to the north*'. Lewis followed this hobby alone and was never able to name his fossils with any great certainty. This work led to a lasting involvement with Roderick Impey Murchison.

3. Thomas Taylor Lewis and Roderick Impey Murchison

(See Fuller & Torrens and especially Thackray from whom most of the quotations in this note are taken)

During his first visit to the Marches in 1831 Murchison was advised to contact Lewis – Murchison had stopped at Kington and made the following note in his field *book 'Mr Mitchell, Surgeon, of Kington first shewed me Pentameri & told me of Mr Lewis of Aymestry*'. Lewis met with Murchison and referred to this initial visit as follows:

> *In our descent into Aymestry we took the path of an old road, up which I had the honour of conducting Mr Murchison (now Sir Roderick), in his first visit to Herefordshire, in July, 1831, presenting in itself a continuous section from the Lower Ludlow rock to the Old Red Sandstone. I had at this time very fairly developed the structure of the surrounding country. My own researches in this district commenced with my residence at Aymestry, in 1827. I had unknowingly discovered the key, and made some progress.*



A page fromMurchison' sketchbook entitled 'First section with Lewis of Aymestry'

Lewis showed the contents of his cabinet to Murchison in which his specimens had been arranged according to the bed in which he found them. He also sent a large number of fossils to London for Murchison's perusal. The whereabouts of the contents of his cabinet is not known.

Murchison also met with William Jones of Ludlow and visited Knowbury Coalfield owned by Lewis's brother James G. Lewis. Lewis then proceeded to send crates of fossils to Murchison for study and identification; these were sent as gifts or on loan. In a letter sent late in 1831 Lewis disclaimed any geological pretensions:

'If possible I will endeavour to throw together a few observations on the geology of the localities of some of the fossils I send you; but I attribute little value to them, as I have never taken the trouble to make sketches of locations or notes on the spot of the particular dip and direction of the strata. The whole of my labour must be regarded by you only in the light of a humble collection of fossils in my parochial rambles.'

Murchison did make his own survey and assessment of the Aymestry area but he made much use of Lewis's original findings in his monumental publications and *The Silurian System* (1839), this with limited acknowledgement of Lewis's work. Murchison read two papers to the Geological Society of London in 1833 on his work where he did acknowledge an obligation *'to the Rev. T.T. Lewis of Aymestry…'* Also Lewis is mentioned in *The Silurian System* receiving special mention of his work on the Aymestry Limestone – amongst the species listed are *Cephalaspis Lewisii* and *Lingula Lewisii*.

A comparison of the Murchison and Lewis findings is made in the table below:

Strata near Aymestry Underlying the Old Red Sandstone 1829-1831

Lewis 1829-30	**Murchison 1831 Field Notebook**	**Murchison 1839 Silurian System**
Grauwacke	Zone 1	Upper Ludlow
Pentamerus Limestone	Zone 2	Aymestry Limestone
Pendle	Zone 3	Lower Ludlow
Coral or Modular Limestone	Zone 4	Wenlock Limestone
Lower Fossiliferous Strata	Zone 5	Wenlock Shale

(Reproduced from Fuller & Torrens p.15)

In spite of Lewis's disclaimers in the above letter - *a humble collection of fossils in my parochial rambles* a disclaimer not entirely representative of his actual achievements - he was obviously upset by Murchison's initial lack of recognition:

'I cannot withhold from you that I felt disappointed in the slight notice my early researches have received in this volume. Looking, or should I say, watching as I have the progress of the subject for the last 23 years, I cannot be ignorant of the importance of my early doings, of the accuracy of the succession I had observed of the rocks in the neighbourhood of Aymestry (the equivalents of the Upper Silurian) previous to your first visit to that locality, and of the value of my subsequent identifications and of the richness of illustrations I there laid before you, and the liberality with which I continued to supply you with everything that came within my reach, and as you acquiesced in the estimate given to my labours by Dr Fitton in the Edinburgh review [in 1842] , I had flattered myself, as others thought, that whenever you reproduced the Silurian System, you would record there a little more detail.'

Edinburgh University Library, Murchison papers 15 July 1854 cited by Thackray

William Fitton, in his review of *The Silurian System* criticised the inadequacy of the historical chapter at the beginning of the book in particular as to the lack of credit to Lewis. Fitton took the trouble of meeting with Lewis to confirm his concerns. Murchison did react to the extent of adding an insert to copies of his book which emphasised his indebtness to Lewis at his inaugural address to the Dudley and Midland Geological Society in 1842.

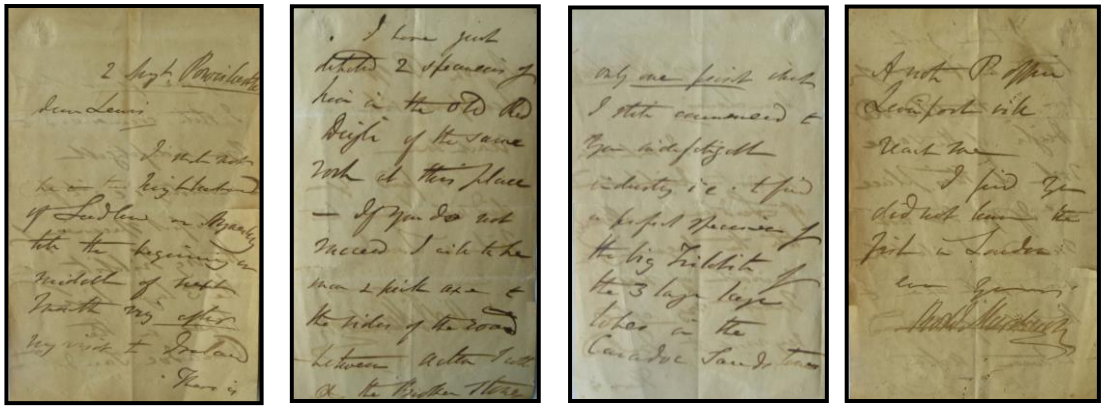
Murchison also responded in a letter to the Woolhope Club in 1854

'In reference to the classification of the upper Silurian rocks, my most efficient assistant was my valued friend the Revd T T Lewis, of Aymestry. That gifted but modest individual first obtained the true key to the subdivision of these rocks, and it he was also the first who made known to me that the black limestone of Sedley must be the same as his own Aymestry rock.'

It did indeed give me entire satisfaction, at the late meeting of the British Association at Liverpool, to point out a flagstone of the Old Red Sandstone, on the surface of which Mr Lewis had detected the trails of animals – some of them apparently made by crustaceans, others by molluscs. Sterile as the Old Red Sandstone has hitherto been in affording any traces of fossils remains except for those of fishes, this one fact discovered at Puddlestone near Leominster, leads us to believe that there must have been an ebb and flow on the surfaces of the Red rock, and no deep sea, just as we have numerous other evidence of shallow and shelving shores, where the Upper Ludlow Rock, with its minute fishes, was accumulated.'

Proceedings of the Woolhope Club, 1854.

4. A Murchison Letter



The Museum Resource Centre does hold one undated letter from Murchison to the Reverend Lewis, a letter that is almost indecipherable.

5. Thomas Taylor Lewis and the Ludlow Natural History Society

Lewis was one of some eight naturalists who made up a Ludlow research group. They had been interested in the study of local geology prior to Murchison's visit in 1831 but Murchison helped them in their research and channelled their enthusiasm, through Lewis, with his own work. The result of the stimulus given by Murchison was the founding of the Ludlow Natural History Society and Museum in October 1833. Murchison was elected an honorary member (J. W. Norton notes).

Lewis was a founder member of the Society and remained a member up to his death in 1858. He seemed not to have donated his fossil collection to the Ludlow Society as the only item present in the Society's handwritten *Silurian Catalogue* is as follows:

Cabinet OS Wenlock Limestone Shropshire & Herefordshire. Corals different from living types - not a coral reef but deep water (Salter)

Stromatopora concentrica Revd T. T. Lewis

One Lewis fossil does remains at Ludlow: ref. G.00114 Coral Favosites sp.

In the context of the Ludlow Natural History Society, mention must also be made of Lewis's fellow member, Dr Thomas Lloyd, who also met with Murchison on the latter's return to the Aymestry area in the summer of 1832. Lloyd was accredited with the finding of fossil fish in this deposit as also mentioned by Lewis in his 1854 Presidential Address to the Woolhope Club:

'My friend, the late Dr. Thomas Lloyd, of Ludlow, in 1832 first noticed the evidence of fossils in the old red sandstone of Herefordshire, about the Wyld, Leominster, and soon afterwards near Downton Hall, and other places in the neighbourhood of Ludlow. Onchus Murschisoni was discovered by myself in the mudstones of the upper Ludlow, near Batchcott 1833, and Pterygotus problimaticus in the exact equivalent, near Croft Castle, in 1835. The Ludlow bone bed was laid open in 1834, by workmen engaged in a quarry – now filled up - on the site of a house near the entrance to Ludford churchyard from the bridge. Its position is near the bottom of the yellow sandstone, known as Downton Castle building stone; a repetition of the bed, vertically……

Proceedings of the Woolhope Club, 1854.

6. Thomas Taylor Lewis and the Woolhope Naturalist's Club.

Following his move to Bridstow in 1841 (see below) Lewis became a founder member of the Woolhope Club and its President for the year 1854. Two extracts from his, lengthy, Presidential Address for that year have already been given above. Of particular interest is his account of two tours undertaken by the club in 1852 under his guidance. The object of the tours was '*to familiarize the eye with the best types of upper Ludlow formation*':

Commencing our walk at the North-field quarry, in the parish of Shobden ……. we visited several sections and quarries along the slopes towards Croft Castle, observing the junction of the yellow sandstone beds, with the old red sandstone near Lucton, and following down the strata to the limestone in Croft Castle demesne valley (the equivalent of the Aymestry and Sedgley limestone, separating the upper from the lower Ludlow rocks), which we examined on each side of the valley, and again at Whiteway Head (on the prolongation of the escarpment from Aymestry and Croft Ambrey), where the strata are highly inclined, and the structure well exhibited. Occasion was taken to explain the meaning of the strike or direction, and the dip of rocks; the use and measure of the same; anti and syn-clinal lines of action; the formation of domes, basins, valleys of elevation and denudation; the actual thickness of strata, in relation both to the horizontal and vertical lines drawn through them; deceptive appearances, of frequent occurrence pointed out, arising from faults, repeated strata and strata rollover. Remarks were made on the sedimentary and mineral structure of the rocks, the creation of organic beings, their duration and extinction, and the importance of their embedded remains in the identification of contemporary deposits. Several of the most remarkable fossils were collected. I need not trouble you with their well-known names. ….. Our walk was continued over Croft Amburey and along the escarpment of Yatton Hill, which afford most extensive and instructive views of the old red sandstone and Siluria district……. A grand feature, hereafter alluded to, the repetition of the upper Silurian rocks, exterior to the south side of the Wigmore valley of elevation, in a great bow, commencing near Aymestry, and extending to the Ambrey and the Palmer's Cairn, in the parish of Orleton, was pointed out. In our descent to Aymestry we took the path of an old road, up which I had the hour of conducting Mr, Murchison (now Sir Roderick), in his first visit to Herefordshire, July 1931, presenting in itself a continuous section from the lower Ludlow rock to the old red sandstone. I had at this time very fairly developed the structure of the surrounding county. My own researches in this district commenced with my residence, at Aymestry, in 1827: but I was working in the dark, and it was in that walk, which I continue to regard as one of the most interesting events of my life, there dawned upon me the vision of the deep interest of the then comparatively unknown country……. The Leintwardine meeting afforded us an excellent opportunity in the section of the new road to Ludlow, for examining the lower Ludlow rocks, between Aymestry and Wenlock limestones; and passing through the Aymestry limestone, we came upon the upper Ludlow rocks, which we found again succeeded by the Aymestry limestone at Downton, and on both sides of the river Teme, near the Bow bridge. Continuing thence along the Downton Castle walks, in the gorge of the river, through the upper Ludlow rocks, we arrived at their juncture with the yellow micacious sandstone near the Castle bridge; noticing here the hitherto discovered northern limit of the Silurian fish-bed, the exact position of which was

pointed out, and fragments of it collected. Our section proceeding now in descending order, again we passed the upper limestone on the ridge of the Ludlow promontory, here forming the northern side of the Wigmore valley of elevation, over the obscured escarpment to the thinned out strata of the Wenlock limestone, to the productive organic shales (known as Wenlock shales) at Burrington. The valley of Wigmore…….deserves a more extensive examination than we were enabled to give it. Its physical features are very striking. The escarpment and slopes from the fault at Bow bridge over the Teme, along Bringewood Chase to Mary Knoll, Whitecliffe and Ludlow; thence by Ludford to Richard's Castle, the High Winnals and Gately, and the exterior diverging escarpment from Orleton Common to Croft Ambrey and Aymestry, with the numerous transverse valleys by which they are cut into and through, especially Mary Knoll Dingle, the Hay Park, Croft Castle Dingle and Aymestry Valley, afford most instructive sections, in many places abounding with fossils. The broken up strata of the lower escarpment, forming the picturesque knolls from Aston Common to Elton and Leinthall Starkes, cannot fail to attract attention; whilst the road from the finger-post at Elton, to Richard's Castle and Orleton presents excellent sections of the Wenlock shales and limestone, the lower Ludlow beds, Aymestry limestone, and upper Ludlow with the Downton beds – in fact the, the greater part of the upper Silurian – into the old red sandstone. The valley of Wigmore abounds with the detritus of the surrounding rocks, which is found swept out over portions of the old red sandstone between Ludlow and Leominster. So much for the parochial rambles.

7. **Death and Family**

The Reverend Lewis had, by the time of the above correspondence, taken up the living at St Bridget's Church in Bridstow (he had also been appointed perpetual curate of Leinthall Earles a township some 2 miles north east of Aymestry). Lewis spent the remainder of his life at Bridstow retaining his interest in geology and his involvement in the Woolhope Naturalists' Club – and stayed in contact with Murchison – who was an honorary member of the Woolhope Club.

St Bridget's, Bridstow - as rebuilt in 1862: Photograph: Pauline Eccles

Lewis, while resident in Bristow, also edited the 'letters of Brilliana Harley' for the Camden Society published in 1853.

Of his family the eldest, Grace Katherine married Owen Tudor Henry Phillips (1820-1894), Rector of Lawrenny, Pembroke in 1852 and the youngest Edith married Thomas Owen Rocke (1823-1892), Rector of Clungunford in 1861, his father the Reverend John Rocke, was also a fossil collector.

The other two daughters chose the land:

Alice Woodhouse married landowner Robert Wyndham Smith (1811-1886) of Aramston House in Herefordshire at St Margaret's, Westminster on the 4th March 1862.

Agnes Woodhouse married John Rodney Ward J. P. (1830-1889) a land agent of Over Stowey, Somerset. They married in Leominster in 1861 and settled in Over Storey but by 1871 they were living at Yatton Court.

Aramston House, Kings Caple

Elizabeth Jane Woodhouse Lewis died in 1874. She had returned to Yatton Court by 1861 living there with her two unmarried daughters. By the 1871 census she had moved into Rose Cottage close by the Aymestry Vicarage daughter Agnes having moved into Yatton Court.

Elizabeth Lewis arranged for the placing of a monument in the church to both Thomas Taylor and his first wife– with the wording *'This tablet is erected by her who for twenty years was united to one of whom the world was not worthy.*

Photograph: jmc4 Church Explorer

The name of Thomas Taylor Lewis is also recorded for posterity in the Brachiopods *Lingula Lewisii* (Sowerby 1839), *Spirorbis Lewsii* (Sowerby) and in the fish *Cephalaspis Lewisii* (Agassiz). Of the members of the Ludlow Natural History Society he must be the prime example of the enthusiastic amateur geologist and collector of fossils.

Thomas Taylor Lewis died at Bridstow on the 28th October 1858. He is buried at Aymestry together with his first wife Eliza.

Dr J. A. Gosling
July 2018

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The Geological Conservation Review 16 Chapter 3

Landscape Origins of Herefordshire www.bosci.net

Littleburys Directory of Herefordshire 1875/76

Findmypast findmypast.co.uk

Appendix 1 The Lewis Family

Thomas Lewis
I
Edward Lewis m. Ann George *Ludford* 04.10.1796
1772-1818 1773-1864
bd *Ludford* 16.03.1819
_____I_____
I I
Thomas Taylor Lewis Edward George 1797-1862
1801-1858 James George Lewis 1799-1887
c. *Ludlow* 26.01.1801 Mary Ann 1802-
d. Ross Samuel 1804-
I
m. (1) Eliza Penfold *Cheam* 24.04.1827
1806-1828 m. (2) Elizabeth Jane Ferguson *Kensington* 20.06.1838
c. *Ashtead* 16.03.1806 1813-1874
d. Ludlow b. *Ludlow*
I _____I_____
I I I I
Grace Agnes Alice Edith
Katherine Woodhouse Woodhouse -
1827-1916 1839-1886 1840-1888 1843-1888
b. *Ludlow* b. *Aymestry* b. *Aymestry* b. *Aymestry*
d. *Portsmouth* d. *Leominster* d. *Upton-on-Severn* d. Cheltenham
bd. *Clungunford*

Grace Katherine m. Owen Tudor Henry Phillips (1820-1894) *Bridstow* 22.06.1852
Rector of Lawrenny, Pembrokeshire.

Agnes Woodhouse m. John George Rodney Ward J.P. (1831-1889) *Leominster* 1861
Land Agent.

Alice Woodhouse m. Robert Wyndham Smith (1811-1886) of Aramston
at *St Margaret's, Westminster* 04.03.1862, Landowner.

Edith m. Thomas Owen Rocke (1822-1892) *Leominster* 14.09.1861,
Rector of Clungunford d. *Cheltenham*, bd 14.05.1892 *Clungunford*