

**The Rev. James Dignes La Touche BA
(1824-1899)**

**The Rev. William Martin Dignes
La Touche BA
(1884-1926)**

**Thomas Henry Digges la Touche MA FGS
(1855-1938)**

The La Touche Family

1. Introduction

Three members of the La Touche family had connections with the Ludlow Natural History Society namely James Dignes La Touche (1824-1899) and his son William Martin Dignes la Touche (1854-1926) and Thomas Henry Digges la Touche (1855-1938). Father James and son William Martin were amateur geologists, both were born in Ireland. Thomas Henry was a Shropshire born professional geologist and a member of the Geological Survey of India.

The Cambridge obituary of James Dignes la Touche notes that:

'Some five and forty years ago the Rev. James Dignes la Touche of Stokesay, with Humphrey Salwey and Robert Lightbody formed a trio of ardent students of the geology of South Shropshire'.

La Touche outlived his Ludlow companions and broadened his interest in geology with the publication of a number of papers on the sedimentation of rocks. His collection of fossils was left to the Ludlow Natural History Society on his death. His elder son William Martin also collected fossils and donated a type specimen - he was elected secretary to the Society in 1907. Thomas Henry, after working for many years with the Geological Survey of India lectured to the Ludlow Society regarding his Indian experiences. In 1927/28, he reviewed the naming of specimens in the Ludlow fossil collection and produced a full catalogue of the contents of the Museum cases.

2. The Reverend James Dignes La Touche BA (1824-1899)



The La Touche family were of Huguenot extraction. David Dignes la Touche de Rompieres (1671-1745) fled to the Netherlands from his home near Blois after the Edict of Nantes *'in search of Religious freedom'*. He took up a commission in the army of William of Orange, fought in the Battle of Boyne and then settled in Dublin. He there established a manufactory of cambric and silk poplins together with another Huguenot and in 1716 became banker for the Huguenots. His two sons, David and James, divided the two businesses; poplins and banking. James took control of the poplin business retaining the name.

David Dignes la Touche, The La Touche Legacy

James Dignes la Touche was born on the 7th April 1824. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1842 and, taking up the cloth while in Ireland, he married and started a family prior to taking up the living at Stokesay in Shropshire. His first son, William Martin, was born in Ireland. Thomas Henry and daughters Grace and Mary Alena were born at Stokesay. Both daughters remained unmarried until their deaths in Shrewsbury and Stokesay respectively.

As an amateur geologist la Touche's main interests related to the changes which sedimentary rocks undergo after their deposition and consolidation and the amount of sediment brought down by rivers as a measure of the extent of denudation of the land. His views are somewhat critically discussed in his obituary which is reproduced in full below.

'Some five and forty years ago the Rev. James Diques la Touche of Stokesay, with Humphrey Salwey and Robert Lightbody formed a trio of ardent students of the geology of South Shropshire'. Surviving his fellow workers for more than twenty years, the late Vicar of Stokesay is the best known of the present generation of geologists, and moreover, while all were equally willing to impart to others their intimate knowledge of the geology of their neighbourhood, he did not share his friends' reluctance to commit to writing the information which they had acquired.

In his earlier geological papers he attacked two problems of considerable difficulty, one being the changes which sedimentary rocks undergo after their deposition and consolidation, and the other the amount of sediment brought down by rivers as a measure of the extent of denudation of the land. While we may not fully accept his original views on the "Mode of Formation of Limestone Bands" (Geologist, 1863), it is probable that "Nodules in the Limestone of Wenlock Edge" (Brit. Assoc. Rep.) and "Spheroidal Structure in Silurian Rocks" (Journ. Geol. Soc. Ireland, 1871) have been formed in the way which he suggests, so that his first paper merely carries his theory a little too far. The difficulties encountered in the study of the "Alluvial Deposits of Rivers" (Trans. Woolhope Field Club, 1868) and the "Measurement of River-sediments" (Geol. Mag, 1868) are quite of another kind, being chiefly manipulative, and it seems a pity that the very careful and well thought-out experiments which he made to form an "Estimate of the Quantity of Sedimentary Deposit in the Onny" (Brit. Assoc. Rep., 1869) should have terminated with his "Reports on the Sedimentary Deposits of the River Onny" presented to the British Association in 1870, and published as one of the "Reports on the State of Science" in the volume of that Year. His papers in the Transactions of the Woolhope Field Club on the "Geology of the District around the Titterstone Clee Hill" (1868) and on the "Geology of the Longmynd Hills" (1870) should be read by all who wish to study these interesting districts.

His principal work, however, is "A Handbook of the Geology of Shropshire" published in 1884 (4to, London and Shrewsbury). Commencing with a succinct but not very full account of the geological formations, from Pre-Cambrian to Lias, which are represented in the county of Salop, a few pages are very usefully devoted to the description of a number of routes by which these formations may be seen and conveniently studied, the best localities for fossils being pointed out. The remainder and much the greater part of the work is palaeontological, consisting of a description of fossils, first of the genera and then of the species, which are depicted on 22 plates. A few new species are described and figured.

In July, 1872, he conducted with Prof. Morris and Mr. Lightbody, an excursion of the Geologists' Association to the neighbourhood of Ludlow and Longmynds, which was highly successful.

*Geology was not his only scientific study; it was but one of many. In 1875 he contributed a paper to the Meteorological Society (a result of a visit to Natal, where he went in 1874 to assist Bishop Colenso); he kept a rain-gauge and other meteorological instruments; and from the year 1876 the rainfall of Stokesay village has appeared annually in Symons' "British Rainfall." Through his astronomical work he became acquainted with Sir William Herschel, grandson of Herschel. He studied micro-scopical petrology, making rock sections with a machine of his own designing and examining them under the microscope until his eyesight became affected, when he turned his attention to the practical study of electricity, constructing the necessary apparatus himself. In Natural History his favourite studies were entomology and botany; he was expert in dissecting insects, and he made a complete collection of the plants of his neighbourhood. In his parish is the only locality for *Astrantia major*, and he was proud to show the plant growing to those whom he could trust to look and not take, but careful not to do so to the mere collector. It may be that his taste for botany and his love for flowers were acquired from his intimate friend Sir Joseph Hooker. He had considerable archaeological knowledge, as his "Guide to Stokesay Castle" attests and at the time of his death he had just completed a history of his parish for publication.*

With these diversified studies Mr. la Touche was also assiduous in parochial work. His ancestors on both sides being of Huguenot extraction, he appears to have inherited an intense desire,

with the needful ability, to help those around him to acquire useful knowledge and to become expert artisans. He not only taught daily in his parish schools such subjects as Latin, French, mathematics, land-surveying, and shorthand, but he also had a room built which he fitted up with carpenter's bench, lathe, and a chemical laboratory, where he gave practical instruction in various useful arts, including bookbinding. His fame as a tutor was world wide, and amongst his private pupils were sons of Bishop Colenso, of Professor Max Muller, and of Sir Joseph Hooker, and two nephews of Sir Charles Lyell.

As Vicar of Stokesay for the long period of 44 years, he had endeared himself to his parishioners, who will miss his commanding but genial presence, his deep-toned but pleasant and cheery voice. He leaves a widow, three sons, and two daughters. His eldest son, who is in the Church, succeeds his father as Vicar of Stokesay; one is on the staff of the Geological Survey of India; and the other is a Civil Engineer in the Public Works Department of the Madras Presidency.

J.H.

Cambridge Journals www.journals.cambridge.org/article

James Diques la Touche and the Ludlow Natural History Society

The Reverend James La Touche was an active member of the Ludlow club from 1856 onwards - and initially a committee member. He donated many fossil specimens to the museum most of which were transferred to the Natural History Museum in 1947. As would be expected, many have locations assigned and many are figured in his *Geology of Shropshire*. The following are listed as numbered in the 1928 T. H. D. la Touche catalogue.

Cambrian

G.06318 B/a/1	Oldhamia antiqua Forbes	Bray Head, Co. Wicklow
B/a/2	Oldhamia radiata Forbes	Bray Head, Wicklow
B/c/1	Dictyonema flabelliforme Eichw var. sociale Salter	Pedwardine
	<i>Fig. La Touche Geol. Shropshire Pl.1, fig.3, p.55</i>	

Ordovician

C/a/2	Didymograptus murchisoni Beck var. geminus Hiz.	White Grit Mine
C/b/4	Lingula attenuata Sow.	Middleton
C/c/36	Orthis (Nicolla) actinas Sow.	?
C/c/41	Orthis (Dinorthis)flabellum Sow.	Onny River
C/c/56	Orthis semisulcata Sow.	Ticklerton Brook
	<i>Fig. La Touche Geol. Shropshire Pl.V, fig.92</i>	
C/c/83	Remopleurides radians Barr.	Onny Section

Silurian

D/a/27	Conularia sowerbyi Deifr.	Norbury
	<i>Fig. La Touche Geol. Shropshire Pl.V11, fig.152, p.62</i>	
D/b/1	Monograptus priodon Bronn	Long ?....
D/b/57	Illaneus (Bumastus) barriensis Murch.	Woolhope
D/d/13	Cladochonus sp.	Stoke Wood
D/d/95	Euomphalus sp.	Stoke Wood
D/d/113	Orthoceras duponti Barr.	Stoke Wood
D/d/134	Nautilus holtianus Blake	Stoke Wood
D/d/137	Phacops (Odontochile) caudatus Brunn.	?
D/d/139	Acidaspis coronatus Salter	Evenhay Lane
D/e/30	Atrypa reticularis Linn.	nr Craven Arms
	<i>Fig. La Touche Geol. Shropshire Pl.V1, fig.136</i>	
D/e/49	Eumophalus carinatus Sow.	?
D/g/9	Tubes of burrowing annelids	Bishops Castle

D/g/72 Orthoceras imbricatum Wahl.
D/h/9 (Pentamerus) conchidium Knightii Sow.

Whitcliffe
nr Market Hall, Ludlow

Carboniferous

F/a/1 Crodus ramosus Agassiz
Fig. La Touche Geol. Shropshire Pl. XX, fig.721, p.84

Orleton

Three of La Touche's specimens remain at Ludlow

G.06318 Oldhamia antiqua Forbes
SHYMS G/1977/0372 Remopleurides sp.
SHYMS G/1977/0373 Rafesquina holli Davidson

Cheney Longville
Onny River
Onny River

La Touche's long list of publications, many written for the *Transactions of the Woolhope Field Club*, is attached as an Appendix. La Touche was also a member of the Caradoc Naturalists' Field Club and it was as President of the Caradoc Club that he undertook to prepare the 'Handbook of the Geology of Shropshire'. The club had decided to offer prizes to pupils in Shropshire elementary schools for properly arranged collections of specimens in natural history. It was originally decided to confine the scope of the book to the limits of the county but it was extended in scope while at the same time producing a volume of moderate cost. The handbook was published in 1884 with acknowledgement to William S. Symonds, Rector of Pendock. La Touche, together with Edgar Sterling Cobold, was also responsible for the setting up of the Caradoc Field Club's '*Record of Bare Facts*'

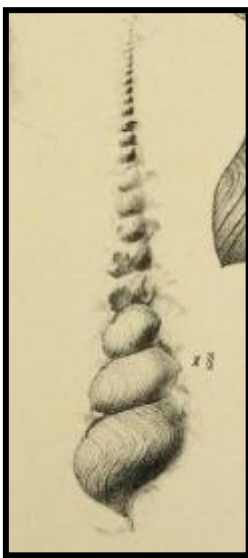
3. The Reverend William Martin Dignes La Touche BA (1884-1926)

William Martin was born in Killicarig, Co. Wicklow. He went to school at Christ's Hospital and was admitted to Pembroke College, Cambridge in October 1882 where he obtained his blue in athletics and was awarded BA in 1886. He was ordained deacon in Newcastle on Tyne in 1886 becoming priest in 1888. He then served as curate of Warkworth in Northumberland (1888-1890) then curate of Phillack in Cornwall (1890-1899) before taking up a position at his father's church in Stokesay, finally becoming Rector of Wistanstow in Shropshire.

William's early school days are outlined in a book '*Christ's Hospital from a boy's point of view*' edited by his brother and published in 1928;

'The present book is written as though the author were still a light-hearted school boy, making little of the hardships and interested only in the day's work and play. There can be no doubt that he had an intense love for his old School, and throughout his life he lost no opportunity of showing how proud he felt of having belonged to it.'

William Martin Dignes la Touche was obviously involved in his father's interests and was a fossil hunter in his own right but his major involvement in the Ludlow Natural History Society was as secretary where he took over from Charles Fortey in 1907. One notable fossil was included in the Museum's collection. This was the holotype *Loxomena latouchii* figured below.



In her QJGS paper Mrs Longstaff notes that:

There are five specimens of this species in the collection of the Rev. W. M. D. LaTouche, one of which is represented by both external and internal moulds; both these and two of the others have the surface well preserved. The Manchester Museum contains two specimens in the Watson Collection. All the shells are partly embedded in the matrix and somewhat crushed; those in the latter collection are so preserved as to have the sutures more oblique than the others. L. latouchii may be distinguished

from all other British species by its great length and numerous whorls, which characteristics, associated with the strongly bent lines of growth, also separate it from all the Gothlandic and Bohemian specimens described by Lindstrom and Perner.....

The holotype is the longest specimen in Mr. La Touche's collection: it consists of twenty-two whorls in a length of 55 millimetres (all the specimens are from Stoke Wood Quarry).

D/d/100 *Loxonema latouchei* Donald Stoke Wood
Fig. Mrs Longstaff (nee Donald) QJGS Vol. LXV, Pl. X, fig.4, P.281

William Henry also donated the following three fossils:

Ordovician

C/b/10 *Calymene duplicata* Murch. Linley
Complete individual Fig. La Touche Geol. Shropshire Pl, 11, fig.40, p.56
C/b/13 *Ogyia (Ogyginus) corniensis* Murch. Meadowland

Silurian

D/b/60 *Phacops (Odontochile) longicaudatus* Murch. Onny River

4. Thomas Henry Digges la Touche MA FGS (1855-1938)

Thomas Henry D. la Touche was baptised at Stokesay on the 18th November 1855 – this is presumably the Thomas Henry Digges la Touche referenced below but the variations of the 'Digues' name in the la Touche family are very confusing leading to some uncertainty – the *Alumni Cantabrigienses* however does recognise this problem confirming that Digues and Digges are valid names. Thomas Henry attended Shrewsbury School prior to being admitted at St John's Cambridge in 1876 where he gained his BA in 1880. He was appointed to the Geological Survey of India in 1881, promoted to superintendent in 1894 and acted as director in 1906 and in 1909. His early work was in connection with searches for coal and in some instances for oil. His later work led to the publication a comprehensive assessment of the department's investigations entitled *The Geology of the Northern Shan States* – a region on the edge of the Gondwana continent including a Silurian to Jurassic sequence of formations with a wealth of fossil faunas.

Thomas Henry initiated a series of bibliographies on Indian geology published in 33 editions from 1917 to 1970. He also authored the *Geology of Western Rajputana* (1902) and, the above mentioned, *Geology of the northern Shan states* (1913) both under the auspices of the Geological Survey.

He retired in 1910 living initially in Ireland but then moved to Cambridge where he resided until his death in 1938. The task undertaken most relevant to this note was to examine the Ludlow fossil collection, update the names as necessary and then produce a new catalogue in 1928. In doing so he rediscovered a lost type of Sowerby's *Orthoceras attenuatum* which had been fastened down so as to expose only a different species of *Orthoceras*. (Geographical Magazine Volume 68, August 1931 pp 362-363).

As to fossil donations to the museum, only four are listed in his catalogue all for the Silurian at and found at Norbury:

Silurian

D/a/7 *Patriata subduplicata* var. *crenulata* McCoy Norbury
D/a/15 *Pentamarus oblongus* Sow. Norbury
D/a/18 (*Pentamarus*) *Stricklandinia lens* Sow. Norbury
D/a/18 (*Pentamerus*) *Stricklandia undata* Sow. Norbury



James Dignes la Touche died 'in harness' at Stokesay on the 1st March 1899 having taken up the living in 1856. The Advowson had been purchased on his behalf in 1856 by his father the Reverend Thomas Dignes la Touche - Richard Marston was the patron of the church. La Touche's place as incumbent was taken by his son William Martin.

St John the Baptist Stokesay Photograph: Edwin Macadam

William Martin married Lucy Margaret Hockin of Redruth in 1877. His first child Lucy was born in Warkworth in 1890, the remaining children; Mary Violet (1891), Alexa Grace (1894), William Frederick (1895) and Dorothy Macleod (1897), were born at Phillack. William Martin died at Stokesay on the 14th August 1926.



Thomas Henry Digges la Touche married Anna Francis Handy in Monkstown, Ireland. They had five children, three born in India and two in Dublin. Son Dennis died at Gallipoli in August 1915. Three of the daughters, Edie, Avice and Lynette, married, sequentially, war-time hero Commander David Wemyss (1900-1989).

Captain Dennis Digges la Touche (1895-1915)

As well as the two sons William Martin and Thomas Henry, James Dignes la Touche fathered two daughters Grace and Mary both of whom died unmarried.

Dr J A Gosling
July 2018

Sources

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Obituary (1938) *Mr. T. H. D. la Touche (1938)* Nature 141, 819-820 (7 May 1938)

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Appendix 1 List of Papers etc. by J D la Touche

la Touche James D, Salter J W (1863) *On the Mode of Formation of Limestone Bands* Geologist 6 20-24.

la Touche James D (1865) *Nodules in the Limestone of Wenlock Edge* British Assoc. Rep.

la Touche James D (1868) *Alluvial Deposits of Rivers* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 249-255.

la Touche James D (1868) *Geology of the District around the Titterstone Clew Hill* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 102-113.

la Touche James D (1868) *Why we should not eat Funguses* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 204-210.

la Touche James D (1869) *Estimate of the Quantity of Sedimentary Deposit in the Onny* Brit. Assoc. Rep.

la Touche James D. (1869) *Spheroidal structure in Silurian Rock* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 88-93.

la Touche James D (1870) *Report on the Sedimentary deposits of the River Onny* Brit. Assoc. Rep.

la Touche James D (1870) *On the Geology of the Longmynd Hills* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 121-128.

la Touche James D (1871) *Spheroidal Structure in Silurian Rocks* Journal Geological Society Ireland.

la Touche James D (1878) *Stokesay Castle* Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society I, 311-332.

la Touche James D (1882) *Notes on the Geology of the Brampton Bryan District* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 189-197.

la Touche James D (1884) *A Handbook of the Geology of Shropshire* London and Shrewsbury.

la Touche James D. (1890) *Notes on the Asterioda or Star fishes of Church Hill Quarry* Trans Woolhope Field Club 35-37.

la Touche James D. (1890) *The Passage or Transition Beds....* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 37-40.

la Touche James D (1891) *The Geology of the Woolhope District* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 160-164.

la Touche James D. (1892) *The Physiography and Geology of the Dingle of the Sapey Brook* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 309-310.

la Touche James D (1891) *Igneous Rocks and the eruption of Diorite at Bartestree* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 166-168.

la Touche James D (1893) *Further notes on the Geology of the Brown Clew* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 15-19.

la Touche James D. (1895) *The parallel Roads of Glen Roy* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 28-31.

la Touche James D. (1896) *Pot-holes and the erosion of Rock-basins* Trans. Woolhope Field Club 170-176.

la Touche James D (1899) *Stokesay Castle Archaeologia Cambrensis 16, 299-304.*

Morris J, Lightbody R and La Touche J D Nature (Tuesday July 4 189-190).

Morris J, Lightbody R and La Touche J D (1872) *Excursion to Ludlow and the Longmynd, 22-27 July 1872* Proceedings of the Geologists Association 1873-1874.

Publications by Thomas Henry Digges la Touche

(19xx) *A Bibliography of Indian Geology and Physical Geography* Geological Survey of India

(1910) *A List of Geological Literature added to the Society's Library during the years 1915-1919.* Geological Society.

(1913) *Geology of the Northern Shan States* Office of the Geological Survey.

etc.

Appendix 2 The La Touche Family

David Dignes La Touche de Rompieres,
born near Blois 21 November 1671, died Dublin 17 October 1745.

.....
Thomas Dignes la Touche m. Ann Needham
1799-1853

|
James Dignes la Touche
1824-1899

b. *Dublin*
d. 24.02.1899, bd *Stokesay* 01.03.1899

|
m. Catherine Munro Mcleod (1829-1915)

William Martin Dignes 1854-1926 b. <i>Killiecarig Co. Wicklow</i> . d. 14.08.1926 <i>Church Stretton</i>	Thomas Henry Digges 1855-1938 b. <i>Stokesay</i> bpt 18.11.1855 d. 30.03.1938 <i>Cambridge</i>	Grace Dignes 1856-1947 b. <i>Stokesay</i> - d. 10.11.1947 <i>Shrewsbury</i>	Mary Alena Dignes 1860-1949 b. <i>Stokesay</i> - bd <i>Stokesay</i>
m. Lucy Margaret Hockin 1856-1944 <i>Redruth</i> 1887	m. Anna Frances Handy 1866-1939 <i>Monkstown, Ireland</i> 1891		
Lucy Katherine 1890-1914 Mary Violet 1891-1937 Alexa Grace 1894-1986 William Frederick 1895-1963 Dorothy Macleod 1897-1983	Alice Gertrude Digges 1893-1959 b. <i>India</i> Dennis Digges 1895-1915 b. <i>Dublin</i> Edith Mary Digges 1898-1930 b. <i>India</i> Lynette Nouvelle Digges 1903-1977 b. <i>Dublin</i>		

Notes

1. Edith Mary (1924), Alice Gertrude (1930) and Lynette Nouvelle (1961) were all married Lt Cdr David Edward Gillespie Wemyss DSO, DSC (1900-1989).
2. James Dignes la Touche was buried at Stokesay by the Reverend la Touche, Rector of Painstown, Co. Meath.