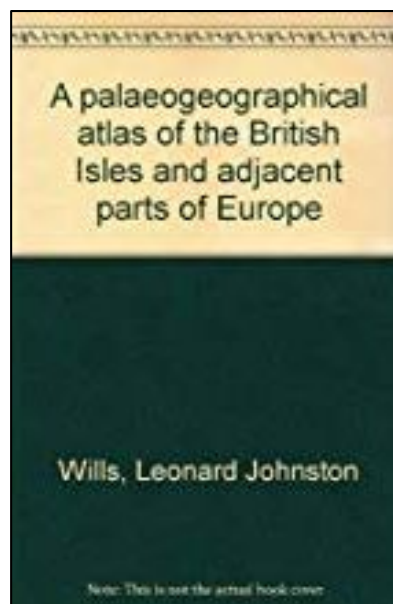


LEONARD JOHNSTON WILLS BA

BA MA PhD ScD FGS

(1884-1979)



Born Erdington, Birmingham, 27 February 1884

Died 'Farley Cottage', 1979

Leonard Johnston Wills BA MA PhD ScD FGS (1884-1979)

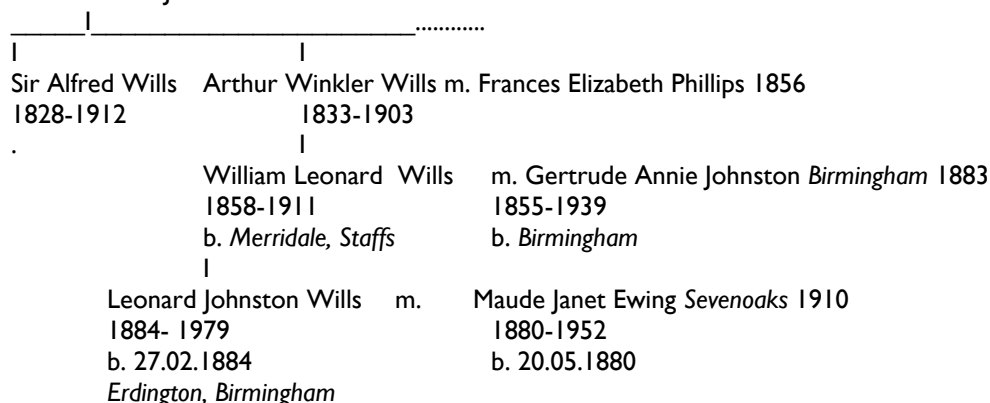
1. Introduction

Leonard Johnston Wills, Professor of Geology at the University of Birmingham 1932-1949, was involved in the identification of material at the Shrewsbury Museum (Roden 1991). He also donated just the one fossil to the museum but this was a rather unusual fossil, that of *Anglaspis macculoughi*. *Anglaspis* is an extinct genus of cyathaspidiform heterostracan – primitive jawless vertebrates known from extensive fossil remains primarily from the Silurian to Early Devonian strata of Europe (Wikipedia). The taxonomy of the cyathaspidiform remains under debate.

2. Family and Career

Leonard (Jack) Johnston Wills was born in the Birmingham suburb of Erdington on the 27th February 1884 to a well connected family. His great uncle Sir Alfred Wills (1828-1912) was a well-known Victorian mountaineer and judge, his great grandfather, William Wills, was a prosperous Birmingham lawyer, his grandfather, Arthur Winkler Wills (1833-1903), bought and ran the edge-tool business of Nechells, AW Wills and sons. Wills' father, William Leonard Wills (1858-1911), was a science graduate of Owens's College, Manchester.

William Wills JP



Leonard Johnston Wills was educated at Uppingham and King's College, Cambridge reading Natural Sciences with Geology in Part II. He graduated in 1906 and became a fellow in 1909. He worked for the Geological Survey 1909-1913 mapping the rocks of the Llangollen area of North Wales. He was then appointed lecturer in Geology and Geomorphology at Birmingham gaining his PhD in 1920 under Professor William Boulton. He succeeded Boulton as Head of the Department from 1932 until his retirement in 1949.

Wills married Maud Janet Ewing in 1910 and raised two children; Leonard born in 1911 and Penissa (Penty) born in 1913.

3. Geological Interests

Professor Wills initially researched the plant and animal fossils of the Keuper sediments in the locality of Bromsgrove, this led to a first paper published in 1907. His research interests broadened into the consideration of the deep structure and evolution of the British Isles resulting in the publication of *The Physiographical Evolution of Great Britain* (1929) and *The Paleogeography of the Midlands* (1948). Wills was awarded the Lyell medal in 1936. His research effort continued after retirement and two further publications *A Palaeographic Atlas of the British Isles* (1951) and *Concealed Coalfields* (1956) proved to be of commercial importance ((Oxford Dictionary of National Biography).

Wills also wrote an account of the Ostocoderm fishes from the late Silurian and Devonian – the armoured jawless fishes of the Palaeozoic – hence the one fossil in the Shrewsbury collection:



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Anglaspis macculoughi (Woodward)

Earnsty Hall, nr Tugford, Shropshire

Wills became an expert on terrestrial arthropods and his research work broadened into investigations of more recent geological history including the Pleistocene deposits in the Midlands and the ice-dammed lakes therein as mentioned above (Wikipedia).

'Jack' Wills died in 1979 when living at Farley Cottage near the Lickey Hills having been cared for by his daughter 'Penty'.

Dr J. A. Gosling
October 2018

Sources

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