

## William Boyd Dawkins - Chronology

The following is a brief chronology of some of the major points of interest in the life of Sir William Boyd Dawkins. Figure in brackets refers to age.

**26 December 1837** - born, at Buttington Vicarage, Welshpool.  
Attended Rossall School, near Fleetwood, Lancashire.

**December 1859** - began excavation of the hyena den at Wookey Hole, near Wells, Somerset with the Rev. J. Williamson (reports in 1862 and 1863) (22).

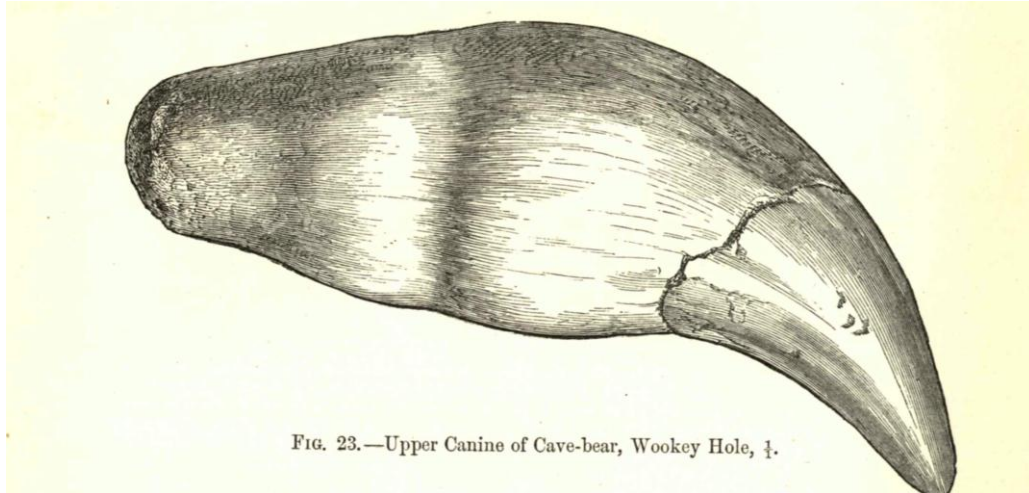


FIG. 23.—Upper Canine of Cave-bear, Wookey Hole, †.

Figure from Dawkins' book 'Early Man in Britain'.

**1860** – graduated from Jesus College, Oxford - Natural Sciences (First) and Classics (Second) (23).

**1861** - appointed to the Geological Survey of Great Britain (24). For eight years mapped the Wealden and other formations in Kent and the Thames Valley leading to a series of publications on mammalian remains.

**1862** - attended his first meeting of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society (President in 1912).

**1863** - elected Fellow of the Geological Society (26).

**1863** - explored a cavern at Burrington Coombe with W. Ayshford Sanford (26).

**1863** - published important paper on the dentition of Rhinoceros tichorhinus (26).

**1864** - paper on the earliest known British fossil mammal from Watchet, Somerset (27).

**1865** - papers on the dentition of Rhinoceros megarhinus and Hyena spelaea (28).

**1865** - MA Oxon (28).

**1866** - elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (29).

**1866** - married first wife Frances Evans [daughter of Robert Speke Evans], by whom he had a daughter Ella Selina [m. Rev. Samuel Taylor 1915, d. 1969], at Dartford in Kent (29).

**1866** - began the publication of British Pleistocene Mammalia (Pal. Soc.), assisted by W. Ayshford Sanford, continued until 1872 (29).

**1867** - gave an address at the opening of the Blackmore Museum, Salisbury (30).

**1867** - papers on the dentition of Rhinoceros leptorhinus, Lower Brick-earths of the Thames Valley and Musk Ox remains in Britain (30).

**1868** - papers on the dentition of Rhinoceros etruscus, and of the former range of Mammoth and reindeer in Europe (31).

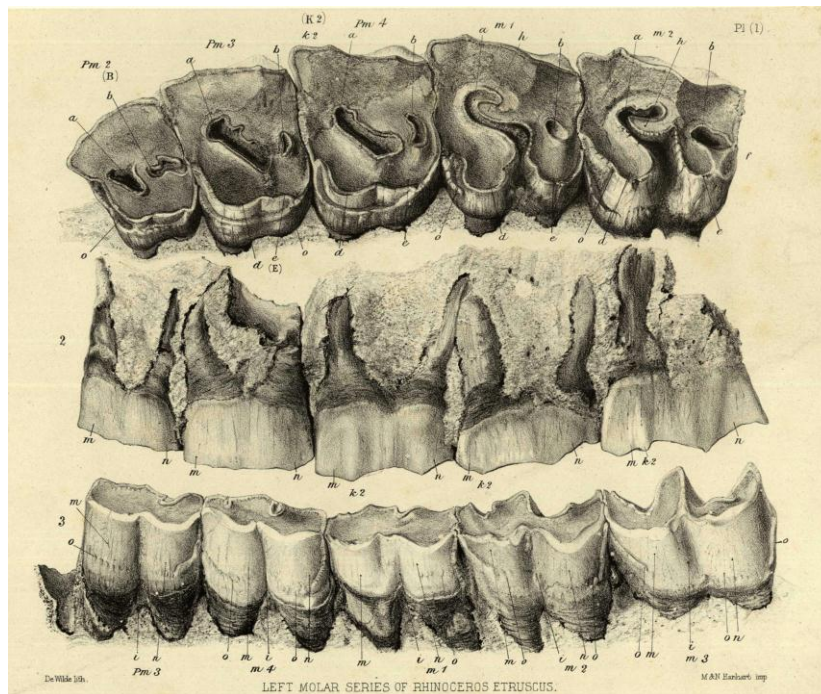


Figure from Dawkins' paper on Rhinoceros etruscus.

**1868** - in a series of papers he described a number of new species from the Forest Bed and Red Crag of East Anglia.

**1869** - appointed curator of the natural history collections at the old Manchester Museum in Peter Street (32), comprising specimens accumulated by the Manchester Natural History Society and the Manchester Geological Society. Tasks included moving the collections from Peter Street to Quay Street, and lectures in Geology at Owen's College (precursor of University of Manchester, then in Quay St.).

**1870** - employed in investigations at Victoria Cave, Settle (34) and published progress reports in 1870, 1871, and 1872.

**1872** - appointed Lecturer in Geology when Williamson resigned that part of his Professorship (35); remained at Owen's College until resigning in 1909 (72).

**1873** - collections moved from Quay St. to new premises on Oxford Road (36). Subsequently, Owen's College and the collections became incorporated in the new Victoria University (founded 1880).

**1873** - WBD an unsuccessful candidate for the Woodwardian Chair of Geology at Cambridge in succession to Adam Sedgwick (36), despite a Testimonial from Charles Darwin.

**1874** - WBD an unsuccessful candidate for the Professorship of Geology at Oxford in succession to John Phillips (37).

**1874** - appointed Professor of Geology (37) at Owen's College.

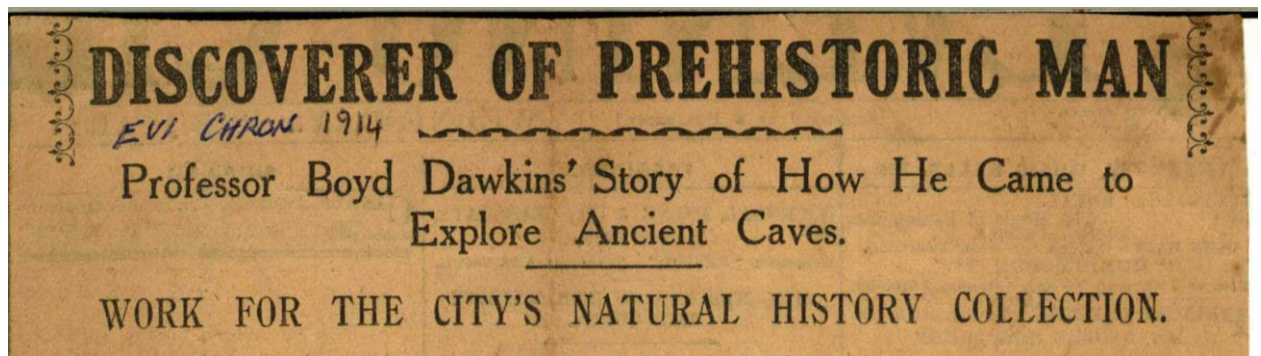
**1874** - his book 'Cave Hunting' published (37).



**1875** - WBD linked up with Rev. J. Magens Mello, Rector of St Thomas' Church, New Brampton, Chesterfield to work the caves of Creswell Crags near Worksop (38). Four main caves were investigated: Pin Hole (partly), Robin Hood and Mother Grundy's Parlour on the Derbyshire side of the ravine, and Church Hole on the Nottingham side.

N.B. WBD was chair of the committee when the caves were re-investigated beginning in 1921, with J. Wilfrid Jackson taking over the role of bone expert.

**1880** – his book 'Early Man in Britain' published (43).

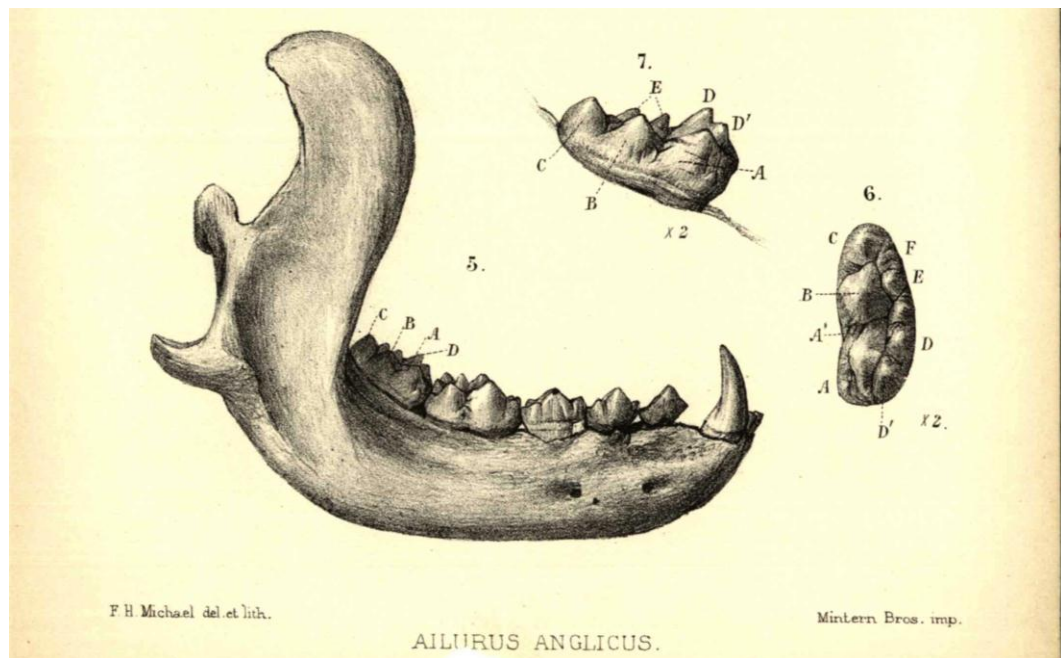


**1882** - BAAS - President of Anthropological Section (45).

**1888** - BAAS - President of Geological Section (45).

**1888** - examined a tooth and jaw from the Red Crag of Suffolk and identified it as a type of raccoon – see below.





**1888** - a main museum building fronting Oxford Road was opened (51).

**1889** - received the Lyell Medal (from Geological Society of London) (52).

**1889** - presented a large collection of fossils to the Manchester Museum (52).

**1890's** - spent much time on 'economic geology' - including proposals for a channel tunnel and the exploitation of the Kent coalfields.

Dawkins was a member and at times President of many learned societies, including: a founder and first President of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society; member and Past President of the Manchester Geological and Mining Society; and, Honorary Member of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society.

**1903** - published an important paper on an ossiferous fissure at Dove Holes, near Buxton (66).

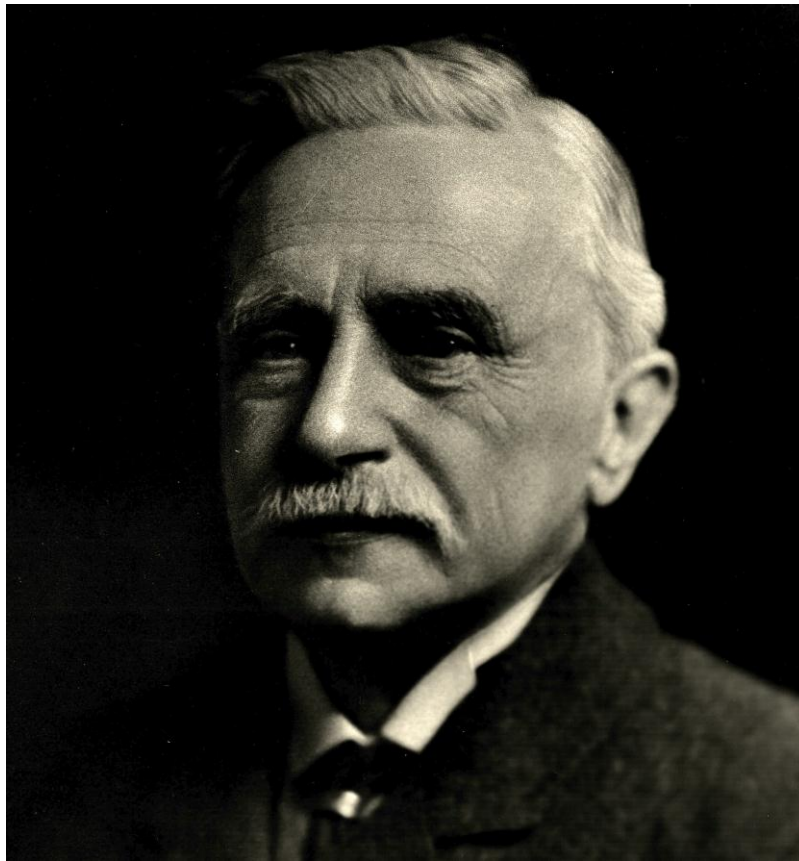
**1909** - on retirement from the University made honorary professor and received the honorary degree of doctor of science (72).

**1917** - published a joint account (with J. Wilfrid Jackson) of animal remains from the Lake Village at Glastonbury (80).

**1918** - received the Prestwich Medal from the Geological Society of London (81).

**1918** - became President of the Manchester University Constitutional Association (81).

**1919** - knighted (82).



*Portrait of Sir William Boyd Dawkins. (Photo: Buxton Museum And Art Gallery)*

**1921** - wife Frances died (84).

**May 1922** - marries second wife Mary (widow of Hubert Congreve) (85).

**1924-26** - President of the Royal Archaeological Society (87-89).

**1928** - gifted material (including pictures, furniture and Cloisonné enamels) to the City of Manchester Art Gallery (91). N.B. Dawkins was a member of the Art Gallery Committee for 17 years.

**September 1928** - opened the new Buxton Museum (91).

**15 January 1929** - died (92), Bowdon, Cheshire.

**30 October 1929** - WBD's library of some 400 volumes donated to Buxton Museum by Lady Boyd Dawkins.

In politics, Dawkins was a Unionist and held office in the Manchester Conservative and Unionist Association. For some 25 years he was a Justice of the Peace.

**Publications relating to Boyd Dawkins include:**

Tweeddale G. & Proctor T. (1991) New Documentary Evidence on the Career of Sir William Boyd Dawkins FRS (1837-1929). Notes and Records of the Royal Society, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp193-200.

Tweeddale G. & Procter T. (1992). Catalogue of the Papers of Professor Sir William Boyd Dawkins in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester', Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, vol. 74, no. 2 (1992), pp. 3-36.

Tweeddale G. (1991). Geology and industrial consultancy: Sir William Boyd Dawkins (1837-1929) and the Kent Coalfield. B.J.H.S., Vol. 24, pp435-451.

Wood Kenneth, (1987) Rich Seams - the history of the Manchester Geological and Mining Society.  
MGMS, Bolton ISBN 0 904905 13 6.

Various Papers, University of Manchester, Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester.

Dr. Brian Goodwin – June 2014  
Buxton Museum and Art gallery