

## **William Roberts Flett, B.Sc. F.G.S., F.R.S.E.**

William Roberts Flett, B.Sc., F.G.S., F.R.S.E., died on 22 August 1979 after a long period of failing health. He had been a member of the Glasgow Geological Society for over half a century, had served on its Council and in the late 1950's and early 1960's occupied the offices of President and subsequently Vice-President; as early as 1929 he is recorded as having been appointed Librarian. He is well remembered among the longer-standing members of the Society, by a still considerable number of friends and former colleagues at the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde, where much of his working life was spent, and by former students, as a very courteous and considerate gentleman.

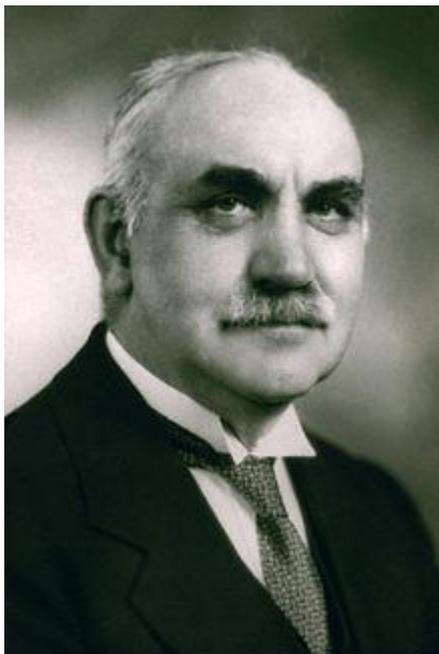
Bill Flett, an Orcadian, was born in 1900. In 1918 he joined the Gordon Highlanders on leaving school and after the end of hostilities, worked in "Army Education" for a period in 1919. Thereafter he studied geology at Glasgow University as Demonstrator, subsequently holding posts as Teaching Fellow and Lecturer. His early interest in economic aspects of Scottish geology is reflected in consultancy work dating back to the 1930's, while earlier still, in 1927, he had contributed to the *Transactions* on the sand deposit at Hungryside, Torrance. He was interested in the Barnesmore Granite of County Donegal before transferring his attention to the granites of North Arran on which he again published in the *Transactions* in 1940. During the early years of the Second World War there were further geological consultancies of an economic nature and investigations were commissioned from him, for example, on Scottish peats and Scottish Carboniferous argillaceous rocks.

In 1943 Bill Flett joined the British Naval expedition code named "Operation Tabarin" (from which later developed the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey) and worked in Antarctica until 1946. He carried out geological investigations on Deception Island, in West Graham Land and in the Hope Bay area of North Graham Land, wintering in two successive years at bases in the South. As an early geological worker there, he was one of that select circle of geologists experienced in pioneer Antarctic fieldwork before more modern facilities mitigated at least some of its rigours. His seniority in the expedition resulted in his appointment as "Acting Magistrate for the South Orkney and South Shetland Islands, Dependencies of the Colony of the Falkland Islands". Bill Flett was disappointed in not being authorised to publish on his geological work in Antarctica but his service there was recognised by his decoration with the Polar Medal in 1953.

Shortly after his return to Scotland, Bill Flett was appointed in 1947 as Senior Lecturer in charge of the Geological Section of the Department of Mining Engineering at the Royal Technical College, Glasgow (later the University of Strathclyde) where he remained until his retirement in 1965, a respected figure and a conscientious and effective teacher. Shortly after his appointment at the "Tech", there began a long association with S.A.N.C.A.D. as external examiner in Geology and his colleagues still recall the meticulous attention to detail that was brought to his work in this connection. During the earlier part of his tenure at the Royal

Technical College, the bias of his interest towards economic geology led to his appointment as Secretary to the Mineral Resources Panel of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), set up to collate information on Scottish mineral resources and advise on their utilisation. These interests no doubt held some of the seeds of the idea to develop the present Applied Geology degree course at Strathclyde University that was under consideration at the time of his retirement.

In recent years, growing infirmity prevented Bill Flett from active participation in the Society's affairs, but he is remembered with respect and affection. He was a devoted family man and is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.



William Roberts Flett

The above obituary was published in *Proceedings of the Geological Society of Glasgow* for Session 120 (1977–1978), pages 1-2.