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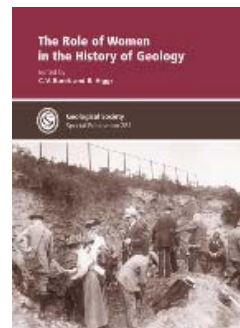
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The Role of Women in the History of Geology, edited by C.V. Burek & B. Higgs, 2007. Geological Society Special Publication 281. The Geological Society of London, The Geological Society Publishing House, Unit 7, Brassmill Enterprise Centre, Brassmill Lane, Bath, BA1 3JN, United Kingdom. Hardback, 352 pages. Price GBP 85.00; (fellow price GBP 42.50; corporate affiliates price GBP 68.00; other societies' price GBP 51.00). ISBN 978-1-86239-227-4.



This volume in the Special Publication series analyses—through an introductory paper and a wide collection of contributions—what was the role of women in the history of geology. The idea for the book was born at a conference held in 2005 at the London Geological Society. The various chapters jointly provide an overview of the contributions of women to the knowledge of the Earth. There are chapters dealing with the work of women in specific areas of geology (e.g. British Quaternary Science), contributions on specific issues or problems (family, travelling), whereas other chapters focus on the contribution of a particular women. Most of the chapters deal with the late 1700s to early 1900s, although there are references to the situation and contributions of women geologists in more recent times.

The book is not subdivided in well defined parts. The various chapters are not related to each other, which makes it difficult to find the “red thread” throughout the book. The last chapters are clearly devoted to particular women, and other chapters dealing with a common subject could also have been put together like this, thus making more clear in how far the various fields of geology are covered. The reader has thus to find out himself, for example, that several chapters deal with the role of women in geological higher education, in paleontology or in their work at natural-history museums, but that there is no overview of geology and its subdisciplines (e.g. sedimentary petrology, structural geology, geomorphology...). Moreover, several chapters deal with the situation today, but an overview of the development of women’s role during the period that the book deals with is not presented, probably because of a lack of data for some periods, and because it may have turned out difficult to obtain sufficient data.

Most chapters deal with developments in Great Britain; much less attention is paid to other European countries and to Australia and North America. Other continents are not really dealt with at all. The lack of information on European countries such as Spain, and Italy is probably not a matter of negligence, but rather one more demonstration of how rarely women played a distinct role in geology in the past centuries, and how difficult it is to find their works or references to it. Even for a monograph on this specific subject it therefore must have been difficult to gather all relevant information. The book should therefore be considered as a pioneer work on this subject and a starting point for other studies and monographs in this field. It should certainly encourage researchers to carry out more studies on the subject.

The book shows not only how women worked time ago, but also how geology evolved, what techniques used and how research results were presented. These aspects are interesting enough by their own, and make it difficult to give up browsing through the book. The graphic information, pictures and graphs, are impressive because there are a lot of old pictures. They show, for example, the clothes of both men and women in the field, the cars they drove in and the tools they used, and this is really pleasant to see. The book is also easy to read, although some parts are dense and focus

on very detailed aspects of geology. The book is therefore highly recommended to those who want to know more about the situation in the past of geology, and specifically about the contributions by women, who received commonly little recognition; but that is changing hardly nowadays.

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