

Archives in the History of the Geological Sciences

This new series will present short overviews of Archives from around the world that are relevant for research in the History of the Geological Sciences in order to highlight their existence and help foster scholarly interest in their content. We hope to thus encourage the use of these fundamental resources by INHIGEO members worldwide and underline the key importance of this historical-scientific heritage for studies of the global development of the geological sciences. In this issue of the INHIGEO circular we present the **Charles Lyell collections of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland (UK)**.

Archive: Papers of Sir Charles Lyell, reference Coll-203 and other related collections

Host Institution: Heritage Collections, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland (UK)

Brief Overview:

Between 2020 and 2024, the University of Edinburgh undertook a transformative programme to catalogue, preserve, and enhance access to the Papers of Sir Charles Lyell, which comprises an historic accession taken in by the University in 1927, enriched by the purchase of his treasured series of notebooks in 2019 and with further deposits and purchases in 2020-2023. This work has included expanding the details of the A-Z correspondence series, transcribing notebook indexes, tracing his reading and compiling a box list of his offprints, as well as mapping out series of manuscript lectures, editorial notes, and annotated books.

Availability/Accessibility:

One of the key outputs of the project is a new website designed to make Lyell's legacy more accessible to the global audience it truly deserves. Providing links to online versions of his publications, the website is thereafter organised around Lyell's principal tools; his archival papers (an inclusive term reflecting the breadth of the material within), his notebooks, offprints, and specimens. The website allows us to make connections, drawing series together, as they would have been created originally by Lyell and his team. Of particular note are the images of the 297 notebooks, which document his observations from 1818 on a European tour with his family, through to November 1874, just three months before his death. You can access IIIF-compliant images of these notebooks via the "Search the Notebooks" button.

After Registering with us, in-person access is available through the Centre for Research Collections Reading Room, open Tuesday to Friday. We recommend booking your appointment well in advance by emailing HeritageCollections@ed.ac.uk.

We also offer remote access via our Virtual Reading Room - a one-hour session where staff use a high-quality visualiser to share collection items live. Please note that recording of these sessions is not permitted.

Travel Awards:

The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH) at the University of Edinburgh hosts visiting postdoctoral, mid-career and senior scholars, for more details visit: <https://www.ias.ed.ac.uk/fellowship-programmes>.

Website: Our new website dedicated to Charles Lyell is available at <https://lyell.ed.ac.uk/>. For information on Heritage Collections visit <https://library.ed.ac.uk/heritage-collections>.

Online catalogue: Access the online catalogue at <https://archives.collections.ed.ac.uk/>. Our advice is to search for "Sir Charles Lyell" to discover the main collection of papers reference Coll-203, and discover newly acquired and associated material.

Bibliography: The new website <https://lyell.ed.ac.uk/> hosts links to Lyell's publications published by John Murray, plus other useful sources including the late Stuart Baldwin's comprehensive bibliography.

Contact: Email: HeritageCollections@ed.ac.uk, Telephone: +44 (0)131 650 8379, Address: 6th Floor, Main Library. George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9LJ, Scotland (UK).



Image: Envelope, addressed to Lyell, from James Croll, dated 22/23 April 1866, concerning the temperature of space and radiation of snow.