



### **Roderick Murchison:**

Murchison was born into Scottish gentry but lost his father early in his life. He originally pursued a military education. His service occurred during the Peninsular War, and though this occurred at the height of hostilities, he was not posted anywhere that engaged in any fighting. Military life shaped many aspects of Murchison, from his temperament to his language. After the war, Murchison married into his gentlemanly status. He did not exert the most frugal lifestyle with his new fortune and while maintaining this status, thanks to the wealth of his wife's family, he eventually had to downsize his life to living more affordably. Murchison was encouraged heavily by his highly intelligent wife, Charlotte, to find an alternate route to respectability. He was attracted to the outdoor lifestyle of a geologist and how he could incorporate outdoor fitness and hunting to his work. He joined the Geologic Society of London in 1825 and became secretary shortly after. Because he lacked formal training that would further his study of minerals or fossils, he studied stratigraphy. Murchison was unofficially mentored under Adam Sedgwick (see below) even though their difference in interests took their research in divergent directions.



### **Henry De la Beche:**

De la Beche was born into a wealthy family that owned a Plantation in the West Indies, Jamaica. He grew up in England, in Dorset, an area known for richness in fossils. He was given a military education but was quickly expelled for insubordinate behavior. This fact he did well to cover up later in life. Military school did, however, give him much experience as a draughtsman, which he utilized often in his later pursuit of geology (and cartooning). When De la Beche came of age, he inherited the Jamaican plantation and effectively began his life as a gentleman. He joined the Geologic Society of London at the early age of 21 and went on to publish work on stratigraphy and fossil correlation. Though he married, his wife filed for separation to live with another man, he had a plethora of health problems and during the Geologic Upheaval of the 1830s lost much of his annual income from his family plantation and fell on financial hard times.



### **George Greenough:**

Greenough was the highborn son of a lawyer but orphaned quite early on. Luckily, he inherited a substantial sum of money from a deceased grandparent that while secured onto him gentlemanly status, happened to come from the ungentlemanly source of apothecary. Originally, Greenough pursued education in Law but soon followed his true passion of Earth Sciences. He studied abroad in the Prussian university of Gottingen which gave him a more open-minded, cultured outlook that was quite different from the chauvinism of his fellow Englishmen. After school, he returned with a wealth of knowledge (and a wealth in his pocketbook) but rather than opting into a life of leisure, rigorously studied geology. He became the Geologic Society of London's first president and one of the few founding members who were still active in the Society at the time of the Great Devonian Controversy. His was heavily and stubbornly involved in the internal politics of the Society and fully viewed the congregation as, justifiably, his baby. Greenough's published work reflected his heavy views of "Baconian" empiricism and he views fossil correlation within stratigraphy not a be-all-end-all, but rather a small piece among many in the overall picture.



### **Adam Sedgwick:**

Sedgwick was the son of a country clergyman in Yorkshire. He attended university and worked hard to pay for it himself. He had the work ethic of a man who created his own destiny and it showed when he was elected a Fellow of his college and ordained. He took a Chair in geology at Cambridge and was elected a Woodwardian professor. His qualifications were not as impressive as some of who competed for the same positions as him, but unlike them, he had a zest and keenness for his chosen science that showed in his volunteer lectures. He joined the Geologic Society of London shortly after beginning work at Cambridge and it was his main scientific affiliation through which he published most of his work. His specialty was in stratigraphic research in the 1820's and the upland areas by his home where fossil correlation was not very relevant.



### **Charles Lyell:**

Charles Lyell was born in Scotland and grew up in the south of England. He originally studied law but soon turned to Geology at the college at Oxford. He worked his way into the inner circle of the Geologic Society of London through the father of his wife, and became its foreign secretary. The society remained his main geologic affiliation and helped him move from living on an allowance from his father, to becoming a professor at King's College on London. Lyell's main source of income became his published work of *Principles of Geology*, an elementary work designed to be accessible by the general population.



### **William Smith:**

William Smith, the son of a blacksmith, was born in Oxfordshire. His father died in his childhood and after being raised for a time by his uncle, he was taken on as an assistant for a surveyor. He was very proficient at what he did and went on to develop *the Principle of Faunal Succession* and received the Wollaston Award for being the first in his country to discover and teach the identification of strata, and their succession, by correlating their imbedded fossils.

