William Smith's 1815 map, a delineation of the strata of England and Wales: Its production, distribution, variants and survival

Tom Sharpe

A new survey of surviving copies of William Smith's 1815 map, A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales, with part of Scotland verifies the 1938 classification of the maps by Joan and Victor Eyles into five series but proposes that their unnumbered and unsigned Series V maps be divided into Series Va and Series Vb. The Series Va maps share characteristics with late Series IV maps while Series Vb maps appear to represent a possible second edition dating from the mid to late 1830s during which Smith was also working on a revised, but never issued, edition of his Memoir. While the paper for almost all copies of the main issue of Smith's map came from the Springfield Mill at Maidstone in Kent and is countermarked 1812, the copies of Series Vb maps examined are on paper made at Rye Mill near High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire in the 1830s. The new survey has confidently located about seventy surviving copies of Smith's map, and the likely location of at least thirty additional copies. It is suggested that perhaps as many as 130 to 150 copies of the map survive out of a probable original print-run of about 330 to 350.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ETYMOLOGY IN THE EARTH SCIENCES: A CORRECTION

RICHARD J. HOWARTH

BOOK REVIEWS

Paul Lucier
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Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. The main side of the W. Smith's work — geological mapping — has been shown to be expressed in the series of maps, created by him, and first of all in the «Map of layers of England and Wales». The layers represented for Smith an object for mapping. His stratigraphic tables constitute the lists of stratons, systemized in the order of their bedding and origin. William Smith discovered that he could identify rock layers by the unique fossils they held. His discovery helped later generations of scientists to understand the history of life on Earth. Published in 1815, Smith's Geological Map of England and Wales and Part of Scotland was the first geologic map to cover such a large area in such fine detail. The map used hand-applied color gradations to show where one formation gave way to the next, conveying three dimensions of information on a two-dimensional surface. Smith's map, which became and remains iconic, is revered as:

- a milestone in cartography.
- the first map to reveal both the simplicity and complexity in differentiating rock formations (a result of detailed mapping by Smith on a scale never previously attempted - see below).
- one of the first demonstrations of the relationship between topography and geology.

creating the first opportunity to predict where mineral exploration would be productive or futile. The late eighteenth century was arguably the apotheosis of the Enlightenment, a time when there was a thirst for new knowledge, creativity and new practices to enable progress and prosperity. It was a time when, aided by parliamentary Acts, the enclosure of land grew apace. In August 1815, William Smith (1769-1839) published what is acknowledged as the first geological map of a country ever produced, ‘A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales, with part of Scotland; exhibiting the collieries and mines, the marshes and fen lands originally overflowed by the sea, and the varieties of soil according to the variations in the substrata, illustrated by. the most descriptive names’. Although there were ‘geological’ maps in existence before this, these invariably only identified rocks by types and are therefore more accurately described as 'mineralogical' ma...