

James Rankin (1842-1915) by Jean O'Donnell



James Rankin was first elected President of the Woolhope Club in 1868 and gave a paper on bats at the field meeting at Downton Castle, Ludlow on 20th July 1869. In 1872-3 the museum was created at a cost of £8000 "of which our present Member of Parliament Mr James Rankin contributed upwards of £6,000". In 1907/8 he was again President.

James Rankin was the son of a wealthy Scot who had made a fortune from shipping and the Canadian timber trade. He was sent to Cambridge and in 1865 took a first-class natural science tripos at Trinity College. When he married a Cheshire girl his father bought him an old estate at Bryngwyn, Much Dewchurch. The young architect, Frederick Kempson, was commissioned to design a new mansion for the couple. This led to Kempson being selected as the architect for Rankin's project, the Hereford Free Library. Rankin became M.P. for North Herefordshire (1880-1906) and again in 1910-1912. He received a baronetcy and was High Sheriff of the county and Chief Steward of the City. By his own example he supported zoological members of our Club to study the fauna of the

County, writing papers on The flight of Birds and The Progress of Zoology, bats, British rodents and insectivores.