

Geoscience Honour Roll Citation – Dr. James Buckland Mawdsley

Dr James Buckland Mawdsley, JB as he was known by his students, was the first permanent head of the Department of Geology at the University of Saskatchewan. He and Professor F. H. Edmunds made up the faculty of the department from 1929 to 1942 when Dr. A. R. Byers was added to the staff.

Dr. Mawdsley was born on July 22, 1894 in Siena, Italy. Ten years later he moved to Gainsborough, Northwest Territories, one year before the province of Saskatchewan was created. Following his elementary and secondary school education in Gainsborough, he entered McGill University in 1913 enrolling in Mining Engineering, the geology option. His university education was interrupted by World War I, during which he was wounded twice, once while a member of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry and the second occasion was while in the Royal Flying Corp. For his efforts during the war he was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). In 1919 he returned to McGill to complete his Bachelor's degree, following which he enrolled as a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton where he studied petrology and ore deposits under two well known professors, C.H. Smyth and A.F. Buddington. He completed graduate work in 1924 and spent the next five years on the permanent staff of the Geological Survey of Canada, carrying out mapping projects in the, then undeveloped areas of Noranda-Bell River and Chibougamà, Quebec. Many of his lectures on petrology and ore deposits were based on his experiences in these localities. Those students at the University of Saskatchewan who took his ore deposits labs in the Economic Geology course were required to study drill cores that he acquired from the Noranda area and to write a report on their findings. As an undergraduate, he must have done a lot of drafting and surveying in his summer jobs, because he always insisted that geology graduates whether they followed the geological engineer path or Arts and Science should take drafting and surveying. His premise was that if geological jobs were scarce, they could always find work as surveyors or as draftsmen.

It did not take Dr. Mawdsley long after his appointment at the U of S to delve into the Precambrian geology of Saskatchewan, he released his first findings as a twenty-six-page mimeograph report to the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources in 1931. From then until 1960 he authored or co-authored 20 papers and field reports on the geology and mineral deposits of the Saskatchewan Precambrian including 8 papers in the 1950s on various aspects of uraniferous pegmatites. His 1952 paper published in CIM Bulletin on the relationship between uraninite and pegmatites in the Charlebois Lake area was awarded the CIM Barlow Memorial Medal. His publications on the Saskatchewan Precambrian in the 1930s and 40s are significant since they were the first produced for public release by a resident Saskatchewan geologist, prior to his arrival in the province any publications about Saskatchewan's Precambrian were by geologists of the Geological Survey of Canada.

Dr. Mawdsley was active in a number of professional organizations. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1933 and was chairman of Section IV in 1954-55. He was president of the Geological Association of Canada during 1955-56 year and

was also president of the Canada Institute of Mining and Metallurgy in 1961-62. Throughout his years as head of the Department, the high regard that the mineral industry had for him brought considerable financial and in-kind assistance to the Department. This regard was manifested in a lasting way by the Geological Association of Canada, when it dedicated to his memory its special publication entitled "History of Concepts in Precambrian Geology". In 1961 he vacated the position of head of the Department of Geology to become Dean of Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan. From 1961 to his death in 1964 he also held the position of the Director of the Institute of Northern Studies.

I'm sure you will agree that Dr. J.B. Mawdsley meets the criteria for enrolment in the Saskatchewan Geological Society's Geoscience Honour Role.