



Figure 1: Fine spine from the specimen *Euthacanthus macnicoli* Powrie, 1864 from the Lower Old Red Sandstone of Tillywhandland Quarry (Forfar). Reproduced by the permission of the British Geological Survey © NERC. All rights reserved. CP13/011

JAMES POWRIE OF RESWALLIE
(1815-1895)

Although not a great deal is known about James Powrie, he was one of the pioneers of 19th century palaeontology and a leading figure in the early history of Scottish geology.

He was part of a long line of Doigs who resided northeast of Forfar who then relocated to the estate of Reswallie.

Powrie took over the estate from his Father, who was a Dundee merchant, in 1845. He had received an MA at St Andrews University and was interested in geology, astronomy, and archaeology – very much a Victorian gentleman scientist.

Powrie was famous within Tayside for his extensive fossil collection and publications about Old Red Sandstone: the local geology for vast areas in and around Tayside. He collected many fossils of specimens including *Eurypterids* and *Pterygotus Anglicus*. One can be seen in Figure 1. He encouraged local quarry men to excavate some specimens whilst they quarried the sandstone ‘pavements’ for flooring and paving, which was a lucrative business in the first half of the 19th Century.

He was the author of several papers including “*The Fishes of the Old Red Sandstone*” published in 1868. In addition to this, Powrie was a fellow of the Geological Society in London and elected fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1865. His significant and sometimes controversial early descriptions of vertebrate fossils and geological accounts of the Midland Valley of Scotland, are still stimulating research today.

References:

<http://www.doig.net/DAVE1620.htm>

<http://website.lineone.net/~erikato/fish14.htm>

<http://scottishgeology.com>



This is part of a series of Tayside Geodiversity biographies. Who have we missed? Please contact us if you would like to see someone included in the future.

