

**BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL  
HISTORY); AN INTRODUCTION TO  
THE STUDY OF METEORITES. WITH  
A LIST OF THE METEORITES  
REPRESENTED IN THE COLLECTION**

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**L. FLETCHER**

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**BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY)**

CROMWELL ROAD, LONDON, S.W.

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**MINERAL DEPARTMENT.**

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AN INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
**STUDY OF METEORITES,**

WITH A LIST OF THE METEORITES  
REPRESENTED IN THE COLLECTION.

BY

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*[This Guide-book can be obtained only at the Museum; written applications  
should be addressed to "The Director, Natural History Museum,  
Cromwell Road, London, S.W."]*

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1896.

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## PREFACE.

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IN the accompanying list the geographical arrangement of those meteorites of the fall of which there is no record has been adhered to. This mode of arrangement brings together specimens which have been found in the same district at different times, and may possibly be the result of a single fall. As the dates of discovery or of recognition of meteoric origin, upon which other arrangements are based, are stated very differently in the published lists of the principal meteorite collections, a reference in each instance to the best available report and a brief extract from it are given.

Even as regards the dates of fall of the remaining meteorites there is much discrepancy among the various lists: every case in which the date here given has been found to differ from that recorded in any other list has been verified by reference to reports of the fall.

L. FLETCHER.

*November 5th, 1896.*



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The Meteorites added to the Collection since the issue of the last List (1894) bear the following numbers:—

88, 40, 63, 76, 93, 108, 120, 124, 125, 135, 152, 256, 379, 452-2,  
464, 468, 469.



## ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION.

By ascending the large staircase opposite to the Grand Entrance and turning to the right, the visitor will reach a corridor leading to the Department of Minerals.

From the entrance of the Gallery the large mass of meteoric iron, weighing three and a half tons, found about 1854 at Cranbourne, in Australia, and presented to the Museum in 1862 by James Bruce, Esq., can be seen in the Pavilion at the opposite end of the Gallery.

The other meteorites will be found in the same room, the smaller specimens in the four central cases, and the larger on separate stands. The casts of meteorites are exhibited in the lower parts of the cases.

The specimens referred to in the 'Introduction to the Study of Meteorites' are in case 4, and are arranged, as far as is practicable, in the order of reference.

The remaining specimens are classified as:—

**SIDERITES**, consisting chiefly of metallic iron (panes 1a-2d):

**SIDEROLITES**, consisting chiefly of metallic iron and stony matter, both in large proportions (panes 2e, 2f): and

**AEROLITES**, consisting chiefly of stony matter (panes 2g-3a).

At the beginning of each class are placed those meteorites of which the fall has been observed.

The position of any meteorite in the cases may be found by reference to the Index and to the second column of the List of the Collection.

## THE HISTORY OF THE COLLECTION.

UNTIL nearly fifty years after the establishment of the British Museum, meteorite collections nowhere existed, for the reports of the fall of stones from the sky were then treated as absurd, and the exhibition of such stones in a public museum would have been a matter for ridicule; a few stones, which had escaped destruction, were scattered about Europe, and were in the possession of private individuals curious enough to preserve bodies concerning the fall of which upon our globe such reports had been given. Hence it happened that in 1807 probably not more than four or five meteoric stones were in the British Museum; one of them was a stone of the *L'Aigle* fall, presented in 1804 by Biot, the distinguished physicist. A fragment of the *Pallas* meteorite had been presented to the Museum by the Academy of Sciences of St. Petersburg as early as 1776, at which time it was regarded as "native iron."

In the year 1807, happily for the future development of the Mineral Collection, Mr. Charles König, the mineralogist, was appointed "assistant librarian," and six years later was promoted to the Keepership of the then undivided Natural History Department; it thus came about that for thirty-eight years the senior officer of the Natural History Department of the Museum was one who had an intense enthusiasm for minerals and made them his own special study. It was in König's time (1810) that Parliament voted a special grant of £14,000 for the purchase of the minerals which had belonged to Sir Charles Greville; with these passed into the possession of the Trustees probably several fragments of meteorites, including at least one, namely *Tabor*, which had

been acquired by Greville with the mineral cabinet of Baron Born. The increase of the Natural History Collections was such that in 1827 the Botanical, and in 1836 the Zoological specimens, were assigned to special departments, after which König, as Keeper of a Department thenceforward styled "Mineralogy including Geology," was left free to devote his attention to that branch of Natural History to which he was more particularly attached.

During König's time, though numerous and excellent mineral specimens were acquired, no great effort was made to render the meteorite collection itself complete; at his death in 1851, it numbered about 68 specimens, all of them acquired by presentation or purchase; many of the purchases were made from Mr. Heuland. The presentations were:—

One of the *Stannern* stones: by the Imperial Museum of Vienna in 1814.

Fragments of stones of the *Moorefort* fall: by J. G. Children, Esq., F.R.S., in 1817, and by Dr. Blake in 1819.

A fragment of a stone of the *Jámerick* fall: by Dr. Blake, in 1819.

The large *Tucuman* iron, and a piece of the *Imilac* siderolite: by Sir Woodbine Parish, K.O.B., F.R.S., in 1826 and 1828 respectively.

One of the *Krakhut* stones: by Wm. Marsden, Esq., in 1834.

Specimens of the *Cold Bokkeveldt* meteorite: by Sir John Herschel, F.R.S., Sir Thos. Maclear, F.R.S., and E. Charlesworth, Esq., F.G.S., in 1839.

After the death of Mr. König, Mr. C. R. Waterhouse, the palæontologist, was appointed Keeper of the Department. It was natural that the geological side of the department should then have its turn of special development, and in fact the geological collections, already important, increased from that time with great rapidity; the mineralogical side, however, had additions made to it, though not in the proportion allotted during the preceding years. During the time of Mr. Waterhouse, only three meteorites were added to the collection, two of them by purchase; the third, that of *Madoc*, was presented in 1856 by Sir Wm. E. Logan, F.R.S.