

Coal and culm: James Hutton's ideas on mining and society

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To understand links among cultural, economic and social world of a savant and his way of thinking is a difficult approach and unfortunately it is arduous of finding these exact links and cases. Although the scientists have economic necessities and they stay inside of a social and cultural context (in their epoch), several times these interests do not appear in scientific works. The bibliography of history of science seems to have success when the society and economy is in crisis. In the limits of this paper, we intend to demonstrate that the geologic making can suggest these interests on scientific knowledge. The method of natural history which was adopted by James Hutton (1723-1797) points out ethic, economic and politic worries to classify the social body and, the point is, Hutton utilized the same method to classify coal and culm (he intended to help Scottish mining). Moreover, the Scottish society and economy were dynamic and progressive in eighteenth century. The conceptual elements from eighteenth century influenced the making of geology of the followed times.