

SIR JOHN ST.AUBYN

Natural History collection

Sir John St. Aubyn, 5th Baronet, was born at Golden Square, London on 17 May 1758. Sir John was captivated by science and the arts and was a keen collector. His particular interest was for mineralogy, but he also had interests in botany, and he created his own pressed plant collection, called a herbarium.

Career

St. Aubyn succeeded to the baronetcy at the age of fourteen and was a clever and distinguished man. He served as High Sheriff of Cornwall (at the age of 23), and went on to become a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Fellow of the Linnean Society, a member of Parliament, Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians, Fellow of the Geological Society of London, Fellow of the Society of Arts and Provincial Grandmaster of the Freemasons.

Interest in the natural world

Sir John's father (the 4th Baronet) was brought up by a Dr. William Borlase (1695 to 1772), a passionate mineral collector. It could be this influence that assisted in creating Sir John's fascination with minerals and the natural world.

It is documented that in 1799, Sir John bought two important mineral collections. The first was from Dr. William Babington (1756 to 1833), who had previously obtained the collection from John Stuart, the 3rd Earl of Bute (1713 to 1792). The second was the fossil and mineral collection of Richard Greene (1716 to 1793) of Lichfield. Sir John then amalgamated these collections with his own.

Love of art

Sir John collected a vast number of engravings and etchings which were sold at Phillips's Auction Rooms in April 1840. The collection was so vast that the sale is said to have lasted for seventeen days. Sir John was also an early and constant patron and friend of the painter John Opie, and was a pallbearer at the artist's funeral in April 1807.

On the 10 August 1839 Sir John St. Aubyn died at Lime Grove, Putney in Surrey at the age of 81. His body was taken through Devonport on 23 August, on its way to Cornwall where it lay in state at St. Austell, Truro and Clowance. On 29 August he was buried, with a great ceremony, in the family vault in Crowan parish church.

Sources

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