

From The Mineral Inventory Files

Three Graves in Margaree

Any geologist working in Nova Scotia will be aware of Hugh Fletcher and his vital contributions to our understanding of its geology and mineral resources. This year marks the 100th anniversary of his passing in 1909. I have referred to Fletcher's maps hundreds of times and have read and re-read most of his entries in the *Annual Reports* of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC). This past summer I found out that Fletcher is buried in the Margaree Valley and I eventually found his grave in the cemetery at Margaree Centre, where it lies next to two others (Fig. 1). The three graves are those of Fletcher, his wife Christie (Christina McLeod) and a man named William Fletcher who died on Nov. 5, 1881. Finding Fletcher's grave led me to wonder: who was this man, what was he like, why was he buried in Margaree, and who are these other people? What follows is a summary of what I discovered, mostly through the assistance of Fletcher's great granddaughter Fiona Brown of Scotland.

Hugh Fletcher was born in London, England, on December 9, 1848. His father, a mining engineer, emigrated to Canada in 1860. Young Hugh's first experience of Nova Scotia came while his father worked as manager of the gold mine at Tangier. Later he attended the University of Toronto and graduated near the top of his class in 1872 with a degree in natural sciences. He then worked as a geological assistant to Charles Robb of the GSC, studying the Cape Breton coal fields. Fletcher replaced Robb in 1875 and assumed responsibility for the geological mapping of Nova Scotia. In those early years of confederation, Nova Scotia was considered a mineral-rich province and its coal resources were of great strategic importance to the young country. Fletcher would work his entire career in Nova Scotia and would be a mentor to E. R. Faribault, who joined the GSC in 1884. Together they produced the first series of geological maps of the province with Fletcher concentrating on Cape Breton and northern Nova Scotia, with its coal resources, and Faribault on the east-

ern and southern mainland, where most of the gold districts are found.

Fletcher was held in very high esteem by the province's mining industry and his work often directly assisted mining operations. Some of his other achievements included directing the Town of Truro to a potable water supply and advising the province on mineral policy. During the early 1900s, when there was a prolonged and bitter dispute between Fletcher and GSC paleontologist H. M. Ami about the age of some rock units, the *Canadian Mining Review* demanded that the issue be settled because it was holding up publication of ten of Fletcher's maps. It was while he was working on the relationship between the Springhill and Joggins coal districts in 1909 that Fletcher fell ill with pneumonia and he died on September 23, 1909, in Lower Cove where his field camp was located.

William Fletcher was Hugh's younger brother, also a graduate of the University of Toronto, and was working with Fletcher's mapping party in 1881. William drowned while he was trying to ford the Margaree River to visit his sweetheart Christie McLeod, who lived in Big Intervale. Hugh Fletcher met Christie McLeod at his brother William's funeral and the two were married about a year later. Hugh and Christie had two children, William (named after Hugh's late brother) and Christine. Christie died of tuberculosis in 1892 and she was buried in Margaree Centre. Perhaps Fletcher simply wanted to be buried next to his wife and brother, but if you read the glowing terms that he often used to describe the beauty of that area, especially Big Intervale, you can understand why he selected it as his final resting place.

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Figure 1. The grave of eminent geologist Hugh Fletcher of the Geological Survey of Canada at Margaree Centre, Nova Scotia. Inset shows (from left to right) the graves of Fletcher, his wife Christie and brother William.