

Robert Angus Smith (1817 - 1884)

Scottish Chemist Encyclopedia Article

Robert Angus Smith (1817 - 1884) Scottish Chemist

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Scottish Chemist

Smith has two claims to fame. Through his studies of **air pollution** he was, in 1852, the discoverer of **acid rain**, and his appointment as Queen Victoria's first inspector under the Alkali Acts Administration of 1863 made him the prototype of the scientific civil servant. He was one of the earlier scientists to study the chemistry of air and **water pollution** and among the first to see that such study was important in identifying and controlling environmental problems caused by industrial growth in urban centers. He was also interested in public health, disinfection, peat formation, and antiquarian subjects. Although his work has sometimes been dismissed as pedestrian, Smith's pioneering studies of the chemistry of atmospheric precipitation, published in 1872 in the book *Air and Rain*, were far ahead of their time and a major contribution to a new discipline that he called "chemical climatology."

Resources

Periodicals

Gorham, E. "Robert Angus Smith, F.R.S., and 'Chemical Climatology.'" *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 36 (1982): 267–72.

MacLeod, R. M. "The Alkali Acts Administration, 1863–84: The Emergence of the Civil Scientist." *Victorian Studies* 9 (1965): 85–112.