



## **Albin Benedikt Castelli:** from an Exilian Descendant to a Renowned Mining Administrator of Coal Mines in his Homeland

\*1822 Dresden – †1892 Velké Březno/Grosspriesen

One of the numerous scientists, who played a significant role in the study of the České středohoří Mts., was A.B. Castelli. He was coming from a family of Czech religious exilian A. Zschörner, who escaped to Saxony at the beginning of the Habsburg Counter-Reformation. His grand-grandson, according to the habit of that time, acquired an Italian family name Castelli. This name was then used by the whole of his family. After passing six years of a secondary grammar school in Dresden and Freiberg, Castelli started his studies at the Mining Academy in Freiberg in 1841. Not passing the school-leaving examinations, he left directly for mining practice in Bohemia. He settled in the village of Horní Zálezly (Salesel) near Velké Březno not far from Ústí n.L. and started to work for a Saxonian company Salesler Kohlen-Gewerkschaft. Under his management, deep mining of lignite seams achieved exceptionally successful results.

A.B. Castelli took a very active part in the study of geology, mineralogy and paleontology of the České středohoří Mts. His professional knowledge was employed by a number of famous scientists, both during his life and later. He was undoubtedly acquainted with the leading geologist of the region - Prof. J.E. Hibscha, who was also using Castelli's information. He gathered extensive and unique mineralogical and paleontological collections, which were visited by experts from Bohemian, European and other world coal districts. He became a corresponding member of many foreign geological societies and imperial institutions, e.g. in Germany, England, Austria, Russia and the United States of America, and was nominated an honorary member of the Imperial Geological Society in Vienna, a member of the Isis geological society in Dresden and a corresponding member of the Scientific Community in Ústí nad Labem. He played the most decisive role in the development of paleontological research in the České středohoří Mts. by his initiating the collaboration with Prof. H. Engelhardt of Dresden, who soon got involved in the phytopaleontological study of the North Bohemian Tertiary sediments. In 1981, Profs. Z. Kvaček and H. Walther described a new taxon *Ilex castellii* to his honour. The term castellite was used in mineralogy for a variety of titanite occurring in some phonolites of the České středohoří Mts.

A.B. Castelli stayed in the position of the mining administrator until 1887, when he retired to Velké Březno due to health reasons. Soon after that, he died. He was buried at Valtířov and his grave has been preserved until these days. May he stay in our remembrance!

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