ALL CHANGE AT THE TOP

We were sad to lose Peter Pusey this year who has taken retirement from his post of General Manager. He was a great supporter of the Friends – more about him later! However we are absolutely delighted to welcome Dr Martin Munt from the Natural History Museum (no less!) as the new Curator. Martin is brimming with ideas and has expressed a desire to work very closely with the Friends and volunteers working at the Museum. If you’re interested in becoming a volunteer at Dinosaur Isle there’s so much work of all kinds that needs to be done. This can range from prepping dinosaur bones to engaging and interacting with the public at busy times of the year. Your help will make the place more interesting and visitor centred and help to keep audience numbers up and the museum safe. Don’t worry about previous experience or knowledge – all can be easily learned. For more information please ring Martin Munt at Dinosaur Isle. (01983 404344).

The Friends have acquired some beautiful specimens of a Baryonyx for the Museum which are of international importance. Thank you for your support which has made this possible. You can see some of this material and hear Steve Hutt talk about this huge fish eating dinosaur at the Bone Day on the 24th of September.

Best wishes

Jeremy Lockwood (Chair, The Friends of Dinosaur Isle)
A MESSAGE FROM MARTIN MUNT

Dear Friend of Dinosaur Isle,

I begin by saying how very pleased I am to be back at Dinosaur Isle. As many of you will remember, I was Curator when the museum was built and for its first few years of operation. Since then I have been working at the Natural History Museum in London, where I was Head of Palaeobiology Collections. I therefore see my return to as coming home.

I currently have the advantage of being a new set of eyes looking at the museum, and am busy dealing with the small issues that I can see, a bit of care and repair; I’m also learning how to run the business. As you would have gathered my background is firstly as a collections focused scientist, however, having managed one of the largest fossil collections and palaeontology staff in the world, I have learnt to be very focused
upon making science financially sustainable, through income generation, managing staff and resources.

You may also know, I recently co-led the Natural History Museum purchase of the Stegosaur now on display in the Earth Galleries and have undertaken dinosaur site fieldwork in China, Morocco, Spain and the United States. However, my expertise lies in non-marine molluscs, and there is nowhere better in the UK than the Island for my research interests. I also have a keen interest in Late Cretaceous Cephalopods and Chalk faunas, having spent my formative years collecting fossils from the Chalk.

Looking to the future my priority has to be the financial sustainability of the museum, to that end I plan to make improvements to the galleries, to boost visiting. At first there will be small changes- new models to support the interpretation of our fossils; these will be followed by changes in the main gallery, getting more recent finds on display. I’m planning to bring exciting opportunities for FODI members, including talks and trips; I’m hoping to be able to share with you some of my work at the Natural History Museum, including trips to major fossil shows, study trips and learning events. I’m also very pleased to say that we are looking at how members can become more engaged with the museum by volunteering in the galleries and behind the scenes.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Martin.
COLLECTION UPDATE FOR DINOSAUR ISLE

Alex Peaker

Gary working on part of the Mantellisaurus – a 3D jigsaw puzzle.

We have been working hard at the museum on a multitude of projects from the never ending backlog of curatorial work to preparing lots of fantastic new material.

Over the last year Martin New has dedicated much time to prepping fossils (including the Baryonyx material which The Friends acquired from Island collector Kai Bailey), and part of the truly enormous mass of fossils generously donated to the museum by Nick Chase. When not prepping he has been working at the Museum’s stores logging the specimens held there.

Alex Peaker has spent a lot of time sorting historical backlogs of donations including a large number of finds brought in by Andy Yule over the years (thank you Andy for these amazing pieces), as well as the more recent donations, and dealing with a lot of research enquiries. Currently the museum is assisting three M.Res (Master of Research) students at the University of Southampton with projects on shark diversity in the Late
Cretaceous, Theropod eating techniques, and a description of a sauropod discovered by Kai Bailey in 2010 (and donated to the museum by the National Trust).

Gary has been working on preparation of various material, including the 2010 sauropod, but mostly on a *Mantellisaurus atherfieldensis* specimen found by renowned Island collector Nick Chase in late 2013. This is turning out to be a fantastic addition to the collection and will probably become the most complete example of this dinosaur to have been found in Britain. The bones are fragile, covered in matrix and often fragmented and it is a tribute to Gary’s skill that the final results are so magnificent. When finished it will be an absolute must to go on display somewhere in the museum. We do need more space!!

The Pubis and Ischium of the new *Mantellisaurus atherfieldensis* joining to form part of the acetabulum where the hip joint articulates
There have been a lot of new donations throughout the last year, too many to mention them all, but some of the highlights include a 110 thousand year old Elephant scapula donated by Mr. Paul Hollingshead. Further material from the *Baryonyx* skulls has been acquired. Over the last year we have received an angular, donated by Shaun Smith, the very end of the dentary, donated by Jon and Lou Moody, part of the maxilla donated by Andrew Cocks, and parts of the dentary and possible *Baryonyx* ribs donated by Jeremy Lockwood.

Lou Moody, admires the growing collection of *Baryonyx* skull material after she donated the end of the dentary.

On a fossil walk led by Alex one of the participants (Emily Tabassi-Gill) found a complete Iguanodon pre-maxilla which she very kindly donated to the museum. Having been found in situ in the bottom of the Cowleaze Chine Member makes this a very unusual find (what it was doing in this lagoon we don’t
know – it may have been washed in from a long way away, but is such good condition that it doesn’t seem plausible). Conversations with colleagues at the Natural History Museum and British Geological Survey has confirmed that no other reptilian or dinosaurian remains have been found from this unit.

Emily Tabassi-Gill and the rare Vectis Iguanodon maxilla.
Above the Iguanodon maxilla fully prepped, below as it was found on the beach at Yaverland.

Finally we must say a huge thank you to Nick Chase, who again has donated a huge amount of spectacular material to the
museum. Amongst numerous other great fossils there has been a lovely jaw of an early horse-like mammal (Plagiolohophus), an incredibly well preserved fish from the red-beds at Brook (finding anything in the red beds is pretty rare, but a fish is more unusual and this is the best example we have seen from the Island), the limbs of an Iguanodon preserved as purple and white bone (more details on this are in another article), a perfect crocodile limb, and a huge amount of another dinosaur skeleton that Nick has been collecting other several years.

**Bone preservation on the Isle of Wight**
ALEX PEAKER

Usually on the Isle of Wight we expect our dinosaur bones to be jet black and indeed most of them are. As they become fossils sulphur from the bone and any iron in the surrounding sediments is combined by bacteria to form pyrite, which forms framboidal crystals which replace the bone and give it the black colour. (Frambroise is French for raspberry which is the shape of the crystals under the microscope). When it forms in voids however such as the lumen in a limb bone it can form the more familiar gold coloured crystals. This process happens when the bones have been very rapidly buried; the lack of oxygen in the surrounding sediments leads to this type of bacterial action.

Most of the bones we find are where animals have been caught in a flood, washing them into depressions such as ponds or lakes, together with lots of wood, clay and sand, causing them to fossilise in an anoxic environment. Occasionally however
the bones aren’t buried so quickly; they can be buried in well aerated soils or left out on an open plain for a long time, allowing the sun to bleach any of the organic material from the bone (including some of the sulphur), and this leads to a different kind of preservation. The fossilised bone is mostly made from the original calcium-apatite based mineral that it was made from when the animal was alive, as well as the iron (and other elements) from the sediments around it.

This can lead to a whole range of different colours including white, pink, brown, green, blue, purple, or red. The bones are often quite fragile and tend to fracture into lots of small pieces making their collection much more difficult. Often however because they were subjected to less energetic conditions before burial more complete articulated skeletons are found.

Above: part of the ilium of an Iguanodon bernissartensis showing a pink and yellowish colour. This is part of the ‘Pink Iguanodon’ on display in the main hall.
Dinosaur Isle in Scarborough!
Shaun Smith (volunteer at Dinosaur Isle).

For the last 2 years, Scarborough’s Rotunda Museum has hosted the Yorkshire Fossil Festival. Last year the event was held over the weekend of 18th, 19th and 20th September. Rather like the Lyme Regis festival and our ‘Blast from the Past’, the Yorkshire Fossil Festival is a 3 day weekend event, where the Rotunda Museum opens its doors to the public, providing fun packed workshops and stalls for children in its gardens and public talks from leading scientists. These stalls showcased some of the country’s finest fossils from local institutions and those from further afield. Exhibitors included London’s Natural History Museum, The British Geological Society, Oxford University Museum, York Museums Trust and of course Dinosaur Isle.

Our stall had our usual display boxes, recently revamped and containing fossil representations from most of our dinosaurs as well as some large ammonites. We also had a new display box containing an impressive complete brachiosaur dorsal vertebra which was brought out of storage especially for these mobile exhibitions.

Interest in ‘The Dinosaur Island’ and our museum was considerable; many were intrigued by what was on show and we were kept engrossed in conversation with the public. Surprisingly one lady brought a bag containing ‘stones’ to our stand, which unknown to her, contained some fossils from the Isle of Wight. Dinosaur Isle’s Alex Peaker was able to identify these specimens, much to the lady’s delight.
Dinosaur Isle was represented by General Manager Peter Pusey, ’Baron’ Alex Peaker and ‘Minion’ Shaun Smith. The festival was blessed with good weather and beautiful Yorkshire sunsets over the bay. It ensured success to all the outdoor events, which included giant sand sculpting, various outdoor workshops, rock-pooling trips and dinosaur footprint trail walks along the coast.

Friday was school’s day and over 300 local primary and secondary school children were educated and inspired by learning about our world’s past. Saturday and Sunday saw 1000’s of children and adults involved in workshops which included fossil and mineral handling; William Smith mapping skills; colouring; plastercasting; astronomy (solar observing); storytelling; performances and many fantastic fossil displays. This year also saw the addition of Horace the Pliosaur, a giant walk-in dinosaur cinema!
Visitor numbers were reported at being just over 10,500 for the event.

The Rotunda Museum itself showcases some beautiful Yorkshire Jurassic Marine Reptile specimens and houses one of the foremost collections of the Jurassic geology of the Yorkshire Coast. The collections also include examples from local natural history and archaeology. It is one of the oldest purpose-built museums still in use in the United Kingdom. The curved grade II listed building was constructed in 1829, to a design suggested by William Smith, the 'Father of English Geology'. It has been described as the country’s finest surviving purpose-built museum of its age and is well worth a visit if travelling into northern territory!

A great time was had by all and we hope to return in this year.

Photo: Part of a trackway of eight dinosaur footprints exposed on the foreshore at Scarborough Bay
GOODBYE TO PETER PUSEY

As the County Press called it ‘Peter turns a page of history’. Peter Pusey moved from the Midlands (only up the road from me- Ed) in 2001 to take on the role of general manager of what was then the new facility at Sandown –Dinosaur Isle Museum. 15 years on the Museum is doing well; keeping its head above water which is remarkable for any museum in today’s climate and expanding and displaying its important collection. Peter told the County Press, ‘This job has proved that working can be fun. The attraction industry is brilliant and the Isle of Wight just fantastic. Fossils collected here 200 year ago before the word science was even invented are still on display here, it’s amazing. We’ve shown over the years it’s a sustainable collection, which we’ve added to with some brilliant finds’.

Baby dinosaur emerging from Peter’s cake (Photo: Carrie Hampton)

On the 23rd of March the museum held a retirement do – although Peter preferred to see it as a celebration of 15 years
of Dinosaur Isle. His children Philippa and Charles attended along with the many people who had worked with Peter over the years. I don’t know the final number but the main hall was heaving. Fizz and canapes were served followed by an entertaining speech by Richard Smout from the Isle of Wight Records Office.

A cake showing dinosaurs emerging from eggs was presented (it was almost Easter) together with a picture by world renowned palaeoartist John Sibbick and a bottle of world unrenowned dinosaur isle sea buckthorn liquor. In return Peter gave a Ginko biloba tree to the museum. Ginkos go all the way back to the dinosaurs.

Peter’s heart has always been with the museum and we are very grateful for all the support he has given to the Friends over the years. (Since retirement he has cycled from Land’s End to John O’Groats and clearly intends to remain active. We hope to see him around and about as a volunteer. You’ll be much missed – enjoy your retirement and good luck.
DATES FOR THE DIARY
There’s plenty of things happening this year and we hope you can support some or all of them. We will e-mail you nearer the time with any up-dates. These events provide valuable income for the Friends Many have food and drink allowing the opportunity of meeting with other dinosaur museum enthusiast.

SUMMER BBQ – Saturday 30th July 1:30 – 4:30pm  Meet outside Dinosaur Isle.

An annual event – a short talk on the Island’s geology and the chance to handle and look at some genuine fossils. Then a guided trip to Yaverland Beach to find your own dinosaur bones (hopefully). All welcome (children must be accompanied by an adult). Followed by a BBQ. Even if you’re an old hand come along for a drink and a burger.
Our annual afternoon for anyone interested in dinosaur and other bones. A chance to see what others have collected and see some of the new acquisitions made by Dinosaur Isle. Steve Hutt will talk on the amazing story of the Baryonyx finds and Martin Munt on the international trade in fossils. All finished off with Chilli con Carne (of different strengths and a vegetarian option) followed by doughnuts.
BLAST FROM THE PAST – Saturday and Sunday 12th & 13th November
As usual the Museum will open its doors to everyone and anyone completely free of charge. Numerous tables with fossil treasures from all over the Island and south coast. A great day out so encourage all your friends and family to come along. Saturday night home-made curry and talks. The evening event is usually oversubscribed so please book in advance. More information nearer the time. Thank you.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ – Saturday 3rd December
Apologies for advertising a Christmas event in the Spring! Early in the month but close enough to Christmas to have a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie. Maximum number per table is six – plenty of opportunity to join in with other tables. These popular quizzes are composed of ‘pub quiz’ type questions – no dinosaur knowledge needed. A fun evening with all proceeds going to museum projects.
TRIP TO THE PITT RIVERS MUSEUM
Saturday October 15th
We are planning a trip to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford this year. Hopefully we will be given a tour behind the scenes but in any event the museum holds an absolutely fantastic collection of natural history specimens. Megalosaurus and an articulated Bernissart Iguanodon are among the many fine palaeontological exhibits. The how we get there and the cost will depend on how many people want to come. If we get enough the committee can organise a mini-bus or small coach. Otherwise we can try and share cars and costs. Entrance to the museum is free and a day trip is envisaged. If you’re interested please email jlockwood156@aol.com.

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