

The Bristol Dinosaur Fact File

Thecodontosaurus antiquus

-Morris 1840



1834



The Bristol Dinosaur is discovered in Durdham Down, Bristol making it the fourth dinosaur discovered in the world. The first three were also found and described in England.

It is one of the oldest and most primitive dinosaurs ever found to date. Within its family of the sauropods (the largest land animals to have ever lived on earth, like Diplodocus and Brachiosaurus) there is only one more primitive dinosaur; Saturnalia tupiniquum, from Brazil.

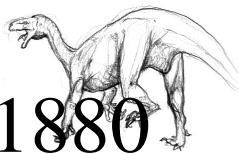
1842



The term 'Dinosauria' is coined but it will take another 35 years for Thomas Huxley to recognise the animal as a dinosaur. Huxley is Darwin's colleague, friend and the strongest supporter of his Theory of Evolution.

The Bristol Dinosaur is from sometime in the Late-Triassic between 203 and 215 million years old but we do not know exactly when. The remains of many individuals have been found although almost all of these are disarticulated.

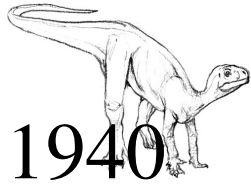
1880



Famous American dinosaur scientist, Othniel Marsh visits Bristol and exchanges collections thereby obtaining well preserved material of the Bristol Dinosaur for the Yale University Museum in New Haven, Connecticut. From this moment, Bristol Dinosaur bones are divided over four different museum collections.



A comprehensive monograph on the Bristol Dinosaur is published by Friedrich von Huene, a prominent and knowledgeable German scientist.



The Bristol City Museum is hit by a bomb. The geology gallery and others are completely destroyed and countless unique specimens are lost forever, including most of the best preserved material of the Bristol Dinosaur.



A quarry worker, Mike Curtis, spots bones in a cave deposit at Grovesend Quarry. Subsequently, bone bearing rock is donated to the University of Bristol. Some material is worked on in a PhD thesis by David Whiteside and six tons of rock go into storage.

The special type of rock that contains the bones is called a ‘cave deposit’. At the time of the Late Triassic, caves formed in the underlying Carboniferous limestone and filled up with rubble to form this new rock. Occasionally, remains of animals became part of this newly formed rock. Quarries are cut into these old cave-systems and so the fossils are found.



The Bristol Dinosaur Project starts and work on the rocks in storage resumes on a larger scale.