



0. SKULL ISLAND AND DINOSAURS - Story Preface

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Skull Island is a fictional island, located—in the film *Kong: Skull Island*—just south of the equator in the Pacific Ocean. You can [find its location on Google Maps](#), but ... keep in mind ... it's still a fictional location on a real map. As the island's location is fictional, so is this map which at least helps us to visualize how the island might appear (if it were a real place).

Before the early 1800s, no one knew that dinosaurs existed. Even when people found gigantic fossils, how could they know the fossils' history?

When [Robert Plot](#), an English antiquarian, found a huge, unusual bone in a Cornwall quarry, he didn't know what it was. When he published a drawing of it, in 1676, he said it was probably the bone of an elephant, brought to Britain by the Romans.

How could he have known his discovery was likely part of a *Megalosaurus* femur?

When Mary Ann Woodhouse Mantell (or her husband, [Dr. Gideon Mantell](#)) reportedly "discovered" the first dinosaur tooth in 1822, and [William Buckland](#) found a fossilized jaw (with teeth still in place), the word "dinosaur" had not been coined.

The tooth, allegedly [found](#) by the side of the road in the English village of Cuckfield, was similar to other teeth Gideon would later [discover](#) in the "Sandstone of [Tilgate Forest](#) in Sussex." They belonged to a creature [Dr. Mantell](#) named *Iguanodon* (literally "iguana tooth").

During the ensuing years, other fossilized *Iguanodon* remains were found:

- A "[horn](#)" (initially thought to be part of the creature's nose but later proven to be a "[thumb spike](#);"
- A [3-toed foot](#) which matched [fossilized footprints](#) [Samuel Beckles](#) (here at the Swanage "mammal pit") found on the Isle of Wight;
- Many bones found in a Maidstone quarry (which Gideon Mantell arranged on a single [slab](#) now owned by the British Museum); and
- By 1884, enough remains to create an actual [skeletal mount](#).

Meanwhile the jaw, which William Buckland had found in a quarry near Oxford, was about to gain its own fame. It was featured in [Buckland's](#) 1824 paper which describes, for the first time, a class of creatures we now know as dinosaurs. Buckland named his find *Megalosaurus* (literally, "[great lizard](#)").

Nearly two decades later, when [Sir Richard Owen](#) coined the name *Dinosauria* (meaning the "terrible lizards"), paleontology was not the science it is now. Since then, the subject of dinosaurs has become a passion for both professionals and amateurs.

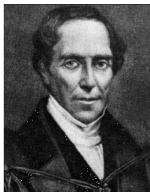
Let's examine evidence of Jurassic-era dinosaurs.

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SKULL-ISLAND-AND-DINOSAURS-King-Kong>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



Gideon Mantell

Dr. Gideon Mantell

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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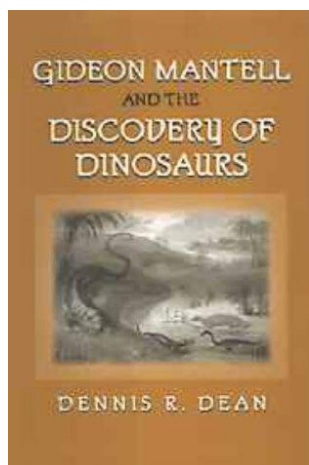
William Buckland

William Buckland

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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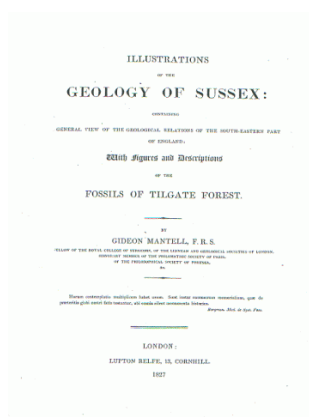


Gideon Mantell and the Discovery of Dinosaurs by Dennis R. Dean

Image online, courtesy the amazon.com website.

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Illustrations of the Geology of Sussex - by Gideon Mantell

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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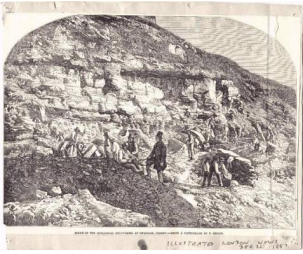
Iguana Tooth

From Mantell, Gideon. "Notice on the Iguanodon, a newly discovered fossil reptile, from the sandstone of Tilgate Forest, in Sussex," in: *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, vol. 115 (1825), pp. 179-186.

Image online, courtesy Linda Hall Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

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Samuel Beckles - At the Discovery Site

Image online courtesy the Linda Hall Museum, Kansas City, Missouri.

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Sir Richard Owen

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