

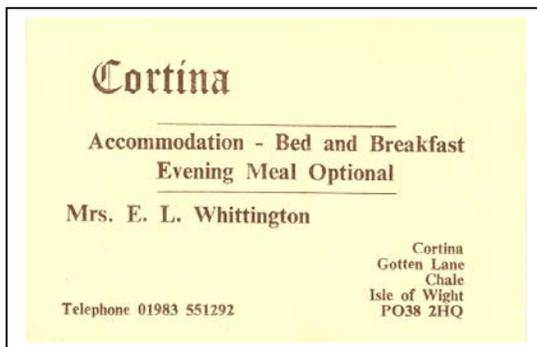
WHALE CHINE ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT



Check out the distance from top to bottom of Whale Chine. It took us hours to drag the two ammonites that we found half a mile along the beach under Walpen Chine. Nick Jagers and myself had been planning this visit to the Isle of Wight for some time, and on that fateful day, sorry, Sunday we drove off to the Island, in a Hurricane. We didn't think that the ferries would be running, especially after passing an overturned lorry on the M25 where the driver was being cut out by firemen. What a start to the trip.

On arrival at Portsmouth one ferry had chanced the crossing, but couldn't make it into the terminal. We decided to wait. After a couple of hours, we boarded the ferry. We were on our way. I didn't think that it the crossing was too bad. Up and down, up and down, heave ho and up she rises. Not really.

We drive to our B & B at Chale, a sleepy little village about a half mile from Whale Chine. There we were greeted by our host, Mrs Whittington. She originally hails from



Malta and is everything nice that you could think of. When we came back from the beach at the end of the first day, soaked through and muddy, she dried out our boots, and washed our dirty clothes. Brilliant. If you ever go there you must use this B & B, only £17 each a night. They live in a house called Cortina and are a lovely old couple. I thoroughly recommend them.

The next day, we visited the beach, looking for those little Atherfield lobsters that are so famous and beautiful. We found the section partly exposed and set to with our trusty pen knives digging out the ones that showed. We both found some. On the way back, we bumped into Martin Simpson a local fossil dealer that everyone seems to have heard of and the stories about him that always grow a little with the telling. We found him to be very helpful. He showed us what to look for, and how to collect at the site. As we walked along with him, He



noticed a big uncoiled ammonite amongst some fallen boulders. Left is a picture of him hammer and chisel in action removing the extra stone from around the specimen. It turned out to be quite a rare form and of course he was very pleased to be hauling half a hundred weight up the gorge. Later that evening in the pub, we spent a pleasant time talking fossils, Island politics, and who did what in relation to the new Dino museum. The drinks went down well. We returned to the Chine for the second day, and found a giant ammonite each.

We could not see how we could move them the half mile to the bottom of the chine. So we decided to move back to the lobsters and forget all about the ammonites. As if! Later that day, having finished collecting and not really ready to go back to the B & B we drove to Brook and wandered at dusk in the footprints of the Dino's. Quite literally they were scattered on the beach in enormous lumps of stone. How could we get those Ammonites up the cliff without serious damage to our nether regions, backs, arms, and other parts to sensitive to mention. Nick had a brilliant idea. We could use his backpack as a kind of platform and we could swing it bit by bit along the beach and then step by step up the cliff to the car. All he had to do was lighten the rock by removing the matrix. The fossil broke. A bit of luck really because it meant that we could get the larger piece into the backpack. So bent over almost double, we took turns to stumble along the beach to the bottom of Whale Chine. Then it took us an hour to haul it up the 400 odd steps to the top. Then to the car. Knackered and we still



had one ammonite to go. This one was fatter, and heavier, and the backpack had suffered seriously with the first trip. How on earth were rain began. It rained, and it rained. And it

rained. There was no way that we were going back down there and drag the thing up in the rain. It had taken me two hours to drag the thing the half mile to the Chine and Nick was very reluctant to leave it there, even though his was safely in the boot. Then we had a brainwave. We could go to the ships chandlers in Yarmouth to buy some rope to make a cradle. So off we went. When looking round we noticed some safety

webbing, some strapping, and two Kite handles. In true Heath Robinson fashion we took our purchases off to strap up the ammonite. It proved to be the best solution that we could have found. Although very heavy, We could swing it up one step at a time quite comfortably and we were not so exhausted as we were with the first one. This was the end of our third and final day on the Island. We were going to visit other sites on the Island, but collecting was so good, and exhausting at Whale Chine that we didn't visit any others this trip. The Island is a wonderful venue for fossil collectors and, ha something for everyone, from Tertiary fossils to dinosaurs. The only drawback is the cost of the ferries. They are the most expensive in Europe. Even the locals now have to pay full price.



Wrapped and bundled ammonite, all components bought at the ships chandlers in Yarmouth

The Little lobsters were easy to find as the section was partly exposed and some were showing poking out of the clay. But when we started to dig into the clay it was quite easy to find them in situ. The blue clay also has fragments of lobsters and crabs, and some of them are different species. Possibly *Hoploparia longimar*, but Maybe not. If you ever visit the site look along near to Atherfield Point for the brown sandy clay almost directly beneath the huge greensand mass. There is a strip of about three feet of the blue clay above with small fragments present. The lobsters are usually well preserved but quite delicate so be careful when prepping as you can damage the carapace easily. Check out the picture below and see Nick standing on the section with his treasures.



The wave worn clay beneath his feet are where you find the lobsters. You can also find little crabs, ammonites and clusters of little shells. In the Doggers nearby larger ammonites and accumulations of shells can be found in the middle. Breaking them open can be difficult as a heavy hammer is needed.

Hopefully Nick and I will be visiting this spot again in the spring. Perhaps this time we will visit some other of the Islands attractions.

Fred Clouter *FRED THE E 2002.*

According to legend, St. Hilda an Anglo Saxon abbess, planned to found a monastery near Whitby in Yorkshire, but the place was rumoured to be cursed and was overrun by snakes. The Abbess is said to have beheaded them all and turned them to stone.



Hildoceras bifrons the famous Whiby snake, and the Whitby coat of arms