

Notice of the Discovery and Geological Position of
a Reptilian Skull from the Albion Mines
Piton, described by Prof Owen.
By J. M. Dawson

The specimen described by Prof Owen was found by me in 1851, at the Albion Mines, in a heap of rubbish extracted from a band of Carbonaceous clay ironstone and coarse coal, occurring in the main coal seam about five feet below its roof, and known to the miners as the "Holing stone". This band is marked no 5 in the detailed section of the Albion Main Coal given by Mr Poole and myself:— (Journal of Geol. Society vol 10 p 47). It varies in thickness in different parts of the mine, from 2 inches to 18 inches; and contains much coprolitic matter with occasionally scales, teeth and spines of fishes and minute spirorbis-like shells, similar to those so common in the Eggins Coal measures. It contains few vegetable remains, with the exception of fragments of wood, resembling those found in the state of mineral charcoal in the coal above and below. It has always appeared to me to indicate a somewhat long submergence of the area of coal accumulation under the waters of a lake or lagoon.

As stated in a note which accompanied



the specimen when forwarded to the Geological Society in 1852, the matrix split in such a manner as to leave the upper part of the skull adhering to the larger half of the block, while the bones of the palate and teeth came away in fragments. Believing at the time that the fossil had belonged to a reptilian fish allied to *Holoptychius*, and that it was interesting chiefly as an illustration of the exceptional fact of the occurrence of remains of large fishes in a coal seam, I forwarded to the Geological Society only the upper and more entire part of the specimen, retaining the remainder in my own cabinet. Since however the specimen has proved to be of so much greater interest than I had anticipated, I now beg leave to present to this Society the remaining portions including a number of the teeth, in the hope that they may enable Prof. Owen more completely to make out the character and affinities of the animal to which they belonged. I shall also take the earliest opportunity to examine such portions of the "holing stone" as may now be exposed at the mines, in the hope that I may be rewarded by further discoveries of the same character. I may remark however, that I have at various times examined considerable quantities of this material, without finding any similar

remains; nor am I aware that ^{portions of} any other large animals have been discovered in it, with the exception of a smooth and nearly cylindrical hollow bone, apparently a part of a large spine, found by one of the miners, and now I believe in the collection of Henry Poole Esq, (late of the Albion Mines, now of Alveston Derbyshire).

Should it be deemed advisable to attempt the more complete separation of the fossil from its matrix, the porous and ~~un-~~ mineralised condition of the bone might permit it to be toughened by saturation with solution of gelatine, in the manner employed for the restoration of ancient ivories.

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