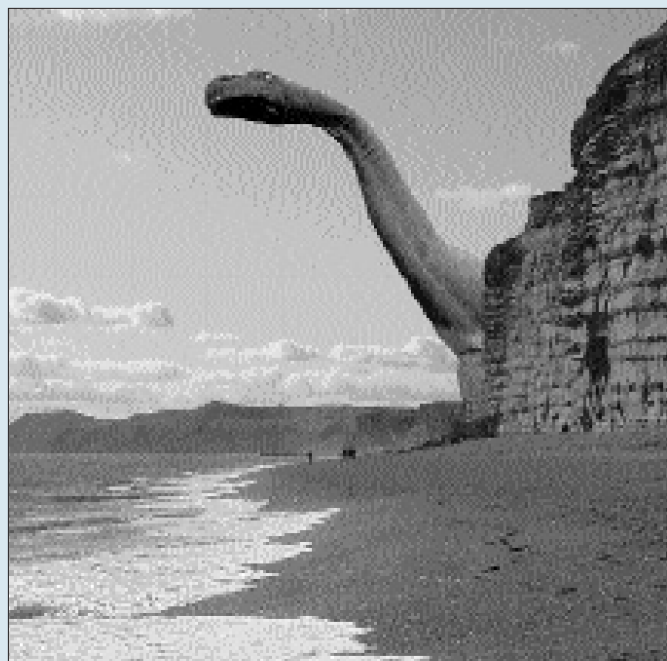


Jurassic Sparks

Laterally Speaking by **Humphrey Walwyn** (first published in February 2002)

It is great news that our beautiful coastline is now officially recognised as a World Heritage Site, but I reckon that our newly found fossil fame may bring a problem or two. For a start, there's all the celebratory commercial goodies being frantically manufactured right now in Taiwan or Hong Kong. Be prepared for "I Dig Dorset" baseball caps, 20 foot high bouncy plastic Iguanodon castles (fun for all the family), inflatable baby ichthyosaurs (for that primordial bathtime experience), cuddly ammonite beanie-bags to fondle and overpriced bottles of coloured antediluvian vodka to drink (Jurassic Ooze Booze). Belemnite shaped ice cream cornets and Lyme flavoured seaside fossil rock probably already exist (if not, start making them now!). Then there's the invasion of the mallet wielding fossil hunters from Brussels, Baden-Baden and Basingstoke who are forecast to flock to our shores. Will the din of chipping from thousands of hammers disturb our migrating swans? Of course, many of them will want to buy my new "Hardy Beginners Fossil Kit" with dinky hammer, chisel, dusting brush, eye glass protectors, colouring book, crash helmet, Evian water bottle and CD Rom—all in a nice wooden box ("Buy now and get your free rucksack!"). The more professional dino-shore excavators might step up to the "Powerstock Portable MiniPneumatic Drill" (for faster fossil extraction) or the "Seaton Self Drive Land Shaper Truckette" (4WD with extending shovel)—all of which will erode our patience let alone our shoreline still further. While it's no doubt great for local business, can our already shrinking cliffs stand the strain of large swarms of unregulated diggers?

Possibly not. Hopefully the whole thing can be contained by common sense. However, if it gets out of hand, we might see areas of the beaches roped off (Eype on Wednesdays, Charmouth on Thursdays etc) or Devon-Dorset Digging Permits (one per family only to EEC citizens) for sale in local pubs and garden centres. Chesil Beach will then doubtless be renamed Chisel Beach. New cliff falls (a very serious danger but also a veritable magnet for fossil hunters) would be closely controlled. There's surely no point in letting mere chance dictate a major commercial opportunity. I propose that individual cliff faces (particularly if there's already a dangerous overhang) would be dynamited every Tuesday afternoon at 3.00 p.m. This event can be widely advertised and become a major attraction. Admission will be charged and all would be fossilers and their families gathered behind a rope to watch. After everyone has signed the obligatory legal papers indemnifying Her Majesty, Senor Blair, the



Our pet dinosaur 'Joy' looks forward to an influx of visitors

local authorities, Air-Sea rescue and gift shop owners (not necessarily in that order) from any potential injuries or loss of limbs, the Mayor will light the fuse. Once the dust has cleared from the explosion, a whistle will be blown resulting in a no-holds-barred race to the still smoking pile of virgin rocks. Rights would be sold for live TV broadcast and "Fossil Family Feuds" game shows.

I'm told that many of our overseas digging visitors traditionally come from Northern Europe. Immediately further commercial opportunities beckon... By the summer most of their national currencies will no longer exist, so all our local traders should naturally have Euros in their tills. Order them up now. But why stop there? We need a new celebratory Heritage currency to mark our special status. We will accept both Sterling and Euros, and we'll give change back in... well, how about Dorchemarks? (At least it'll help our German visitors part with their cash more readily out of nostalgia for their old currency). The one Dorchemark coin probably has a bronzed ammonite on the front and crossed Chisels on the reverse. (Please email other suggestions to our editor). 100 Dorchemarks are equal to (obviously!) one Golden Cap. The Golden Cap note will feature a picture of itself surrounded by the Latin motto "*In Petras Aurum Est*" which translates literally as "Thar's Gold In Them Thar Cliffs". So at least it's an honest ripoff...



Humphrey Walwyn

1948 - 2025

In a heartfelt tribute to Humphrey Walwyn at his funeral in October, his son Tom asked a question: how can one encapsulate such an extraordinary life in a single eulogy? Co-written with his brother, George, he proceeded to deliver an in-depth and moving account of Humphrey's life.

A contributor to the *Marshwood Vale Magazine* for twenty years, Humphrey Walwyn was born in London, the son of Rear Admiral James and Pamela Walwyn. His childhood was split between prep school, Winchester College, and his parents' house in Malta, but he was happiest spending time with his grandmother in Wraxall near Dorchester.

Much of Humphrey's life, as Tom explained, was driven by his rebellious nature and sometimes wrapped in myth. After a lively time spent at Winchester and threatened with naval college at Dartmouth, Humphrey rejected a life of service and ran away to Canada to become a teacher and then a DJ.

In 1968 he decided to join the Red Cross, via Save the Children. After just two weeks of training in Geneva, he found himself administering aid in Biafra during that terrible conflict. One extraordinary story from that time involves him being shot while fixing a flat tyre. He was only saved from death, he claimed, because the jubilant platoon commander had spent time at Oxford and decided to spare him.

Humphrey's career was marked by a consistent love for music. In the late 1960s, he played in a rock band called the 'Black Russians' and although his main interests were Jimi Hendrix and Deep Purple he presented *Night Ride* on Radio 2, featuring hours of 'easy listening.' He later moved to Glasgow to serve as Head of Music and Light Entertainment for BBC Scotland and managed the BBC Scotland Concert Orchestra.

He was then drawn to the BBC World Service, broadcasting Western tunes to 50 million souls weekly. He travelled the world recording live radio shows of the Rolling Stones, Elton John's first concerts in Moscow, and Led Zeppelin in Luxembourg. His favourite collaboration was with his lifelong friend Tommy Vance. Together, they broadcast rock music across the globe.

In the early 80s, he was asked to run BBC Records, the growing commercial arm of the BBC. During his tenure, many strange and unusual records entered the nation's collection: thrilling *Doctor Who* episodes, the

Miami Vice soundtrack, the best-selling *Horror Sound Effects* LP, and the renowned 1981 radio drama of *The Lord of the Rings*. Told it would never sell, he delivered 20 box sets to Harrods, which sold out immediately. He received gold discs for Aled Jones' carols, Enya's first album, and also for Nick Berry's *Every Loser Wins*.

From there, he moved to mainstream pop acts as Executive Director of BMG/RCA/Arista Records and then Stylus Music. He moved to Beverly Hills in California, where he curated jazz albums, working with jazz label Mainstream Music and subsequently selling that business to Sony.

Since his time at the BBC, he had been working on a charity project, the establishment of the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (L.I.P.A.) with Paul McCartney and Mark Featherstone-Witty. He then took a brief hiatus from music to run Linguaphone, shifting its business model from a suitcase of cassettes to an online platform.

As his career in record companies drew to a close he continued to play music, forming the Basement Band with friends to play pub gigs and parties.

Living in Burton Bradstock, Humphrey quickly won people over through his involvement in village life: local projects, performing as the hilarious yet terrifying panto dame 'Molly Coddle,' and his long-standing *Marshwood Vale Magazine* column of absurd observations, 'Laterally Speaking.'

Tom and George remember their father as an 'exceptional entertainer' who loved games, cinema, practical jokes, silliness, and especially fishing. Whether casting for salmon on the River Shin, bone fishing in Mexico, or patiently searching for trout in the chalk streams of Hampshire, he was never happier than standing in the twilight and launching a fly across moving water.

Apart from 20 years of hilarious columns for this magazine, one of the joyful aspects of Humphrey, as described by Tom and George, was his determination that 'the daunting prospect of adulthood' did not have to be constricted by stuffiness and boredom. As Tom put it, 'We had licence to be fun forever.'

In Humphrey Walwyn's memory, we will be publishing a selection of his 'Laterally Speaking' columns over the coming months, beginning with his first column in February 2002 on the opposite page. To be sure not to miss articles, sign up for our monthly article alert by sending your email address to info@marshwoodvale.com