

DISCOVERY OF FOSSIL HYÆNAS IN KENT.

A most interesting discovery has, within these few days, been made in this county, by John Braddick, Esq. of Boughton Mount, of the fossil remains of an extinct species of hyæna and some other antediluvian animals, in the extensive quarries of Boughton, about three miles south of Maidstone. These quarries appear to have been worked for many centuries; and there is a tradition that many of the materials of Westminster Abbey, and other ancient buildings in London, were brought from hence; they have lately been extensively wrought by Mr. Braddick, for the purpose of erecting buildings on his estate. The stone is designated most commonly by the name of Kentish Rag: it consists of a succession of beds of limestone and coarse flint dispersed in irregular thickness through a matrix of sand and sandstone; its geological position is in the lowest region of the green-sand formation immediately above the weald clay. The remains in question consist of the jaws, teeth, and broken portions of the skull, together with bones of the fore and hind legs of a very large hyæna, and a few other teeth and bones apparently of the ox and horse. All these were found nearly together, within the space of a few feet in one of the numerous cracks or fissures (locally called vents) that intersect the strata at this place, and are usually from one to twenty feet broad: on the sides of many of these vents are hollow apertures of various sizes, some of which occasionally expand themselves into caves: two such caves have lately been destroyed in the quarries on the north side of the valley, at Boughton Mount. These fissures or vents cut through the strata from the bottom of the quarries to the surface, and are filled with diluvial loam, interspersed with fragments of the adjacent rocks, and numerous chalk-flints; these last must have been drifted hither from some distant hills, and have fallen into the fissures at the same time with the loam. This loam at its upper extremity becomes united to that which covers the surface of the quarry and the adjacent fields. The bones were discovered at about fifteen feet deep in one of those fissures; and from the manner in which they were scattered amongst the loam and stony fragments, they appear to have been drifted to their present place at the same time with the diluvial matter, amongst which they lay occupying a position pre-

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cisely similar to the bones of hyænas and other animals, that were discovered in the fissures of the break-water limestone rock, near Plymouth, embedded in similar diluvial loam and pebbles. It is highly probable that at Boughton, as was the case at Plymouth, the caves communicating with these fissures will be found to contain an abundance of similar bones. Mr. Braddick's workmen say they have frequently found them in his quarries, but always neglected to preserve them; one fine head was thus lost but a few weeks ago: — enough, however, has already been done to show that the hyæna was among the antediluvian inhabitants of Kent, as it has been proved to have been among those of Yorkshire and Devon; and it is highly probable that if the proprietors of quarries in this country will reward their workmen for preserving whatever teeth, or bones, or fragments of bones, they may dig up in the course of working their stone, many similar discoveries will soon be made. Professor Buckland and some other gentlemen of the Geological Society of London have this week visited Mr. Braddick's quarries, and entertain the most sanguine expectations that his further researches therein will be attended with success. Mr. B. has added materially

to the value of his discovery, by communicating information of it immediately to the Geological Society of London, as well as by presenting the specimens to their museum. – Maidstone, June 12, 1827.

This is one of a spate of similar discoveries reported in the 1820s – discoveries which would not have been thought twice about, let alone reported, had it not been for the excitement generated by Buckland's investigation of an antediluvian hyaenas' den in Yorkshire. ('Antediluvian' was a technical term at the time: it meant 'dating from the period before the (most recent) deluge'. The modernized meaning would be 'dating from the period before the (most recent) glaciation'. As Buckland realized later, the deluge which had sculpted the British landscape was a deluge of ice, not water.) A shorter version of the same report appeared in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for July 1827; I suspect that both versions were copied (without acknowledgment) from a local newspaper, but am not in a position to check that out. I cannot identify the author. – C.F. July 2013.>

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