

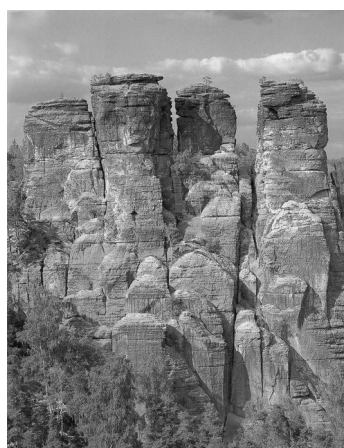
Elbe Sandstone Mountains

Jenny Martin

Just before Christmas we visited Dresden which spans the Elbe in Saxony. It is very interesting with Christmas fairs, a magnificent Cathedral, the famous Frauenkirche, the Zwinger and castle with its many museums and galleries.



On the Sunday we drove along the Elbe to Bad Schandau, passing Konigstein castle on it's hilltop, we could see a number of mesa-like plateaus in the distance. We crossed the river and wound up the valley, with sandstone



cliffs and waterfalls, and so to Burg Hohnstein with its castle (13th century) perched spectacularly on the edge of the cliff above the Polenz valley. The castle is now a

Youth Hostel and in the summer there is a hiking trail (6 km) along the fault between the sandstone and the older granite of the Lausitz

mountains. During the war the castle was a prison. Originally it was the official seat of the Electorate of Saxony.

The reason for our trip was a little further on - the Bastei. These sandstone pillars tower over the Elbe below and have been a local attraction for 200 hundred years. They are now part of the "Bastion National Park". There is a restaurant and a little bridge allowing people to wander through the pinnacles at height. There are also a few remains of a time when the area was fortified and lived in, including a mangonel which was used to defend the draw bridge.

The gorges and pinnacles and deeply scored valleys are fascinating to look at and no doubt, in better weather, to climb around and walk through.



The sandstone was laid down 100 million years ago during the Upper Cretaceous by vast rivers depositing material from the surrounding mainland into the Cretaceous sea compressed between the Lausitzer Bergland (granite) and the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains). When the Cretaceous sea retreated after about seven million years the sandstone mass was affected by the elevation of the granite along the Lausitz fault. The Erzgebirge also rose by nearly 1000 metres and caused basaltic upwellings raising the sandstone in places but not breaking through; the highest point, Grosser Zschirnstern (561m), was

formed in this way.

The square sandstone plateaux, pillars and pinnacles are caused by dislocation followed by erosion over millions of years. It is a fascinating and beautiful place to visit if you are ever in the area.

The geology is taken from "The Saxon Switzerland NP", by R Dobermann, Schöningh Verlag

PURBECK STONE

John Parkins

The Isle of Purbeck was, during the late forties, a good place to be young. Coming from a blitzed house in London there was a degree of freedom denied to most young people today. Having dug my first fossil from out of a Wareham garden when nine, I was able to cycle all over the island, from the chalk of Ballard to the limestones and greensands of Lulworth; an area that was later to become the eastern part of the Jurassic Coast. That first fossil remains a tantalising mystery for although Wareham is situated on the Eocene, the fossil is Lower Jurassic. The house was once a small coaching inn and I have visions of a child losing a treasured find on the way home, or a parent surreptitiously dumping it.

The heart of Purbeck is the land between the high coastal ridge and the chalk Purbeck Hills inland that run from sea to sea, breached only at Corfe where Crow Castle stands sentinel. Between these, the softer Lower Jurassic beds line a rich green valley that narrows westwards. Moving upwards from this lower land, seawards, the hedgerows give way to dry stone walls that in those days enclosed a private feeling place, a place distinct in

character from the rest of Purbeck, where the air influenced by the proximity of the sea is thinner, fresher. From the time of the Romans whose Kimmeridge shale jewellery, tesserae and furniture is found widely, until comparatively recently, this was a place of small quarries worked by one man or a family, cutting and working the slabs of Purbeck Stone or the decorative 'marble', densely packed with the freshwater shells of *viviparus* and glowing in deep rich greens and reds. At least one local church there is richly decorated with it as a catalogue of what can be offered. It can also be found in Salisbury Cathedral. Much of Purbeck stone is a soft golden coloured rock full of shell that weathers far more readily than that from Portland to the west. As a consequence whilst Portland graces such places as St. Pauls and The British Museum, much from this island is confined to a more local use adding distinctive touch to the vernacular architecture.



With a growing fashion for more distant and exotic materials many of the Purbeck quarries amalgamated. There were a few, however, that continued to work in a smaller scale quite late. One of these was Thomas Hancock whose yard was next to Swanage railway station and with whose children I went to school. In these days of steam nostalgia many ride the preserved rump of the Swanage line, often pulled by a West of England steam loco