

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 May 2006

120 Million Year Old Hip Replacement!

One of the Sedgwick Museum's dinosaurs gets a long-awaited adjustment

Iguanodon bernissartensis is a 11 metre long, 5 metre tall dinosaur that dominates the entrance to the **Sedgwick Museum** at Cambridge. The skeleton was donated to the University in 1909, by Leopold II (King of the Belgians) as part of the celebrations in Cambridge associated with the centenary of the birth of Charles Darwin.

At the time an honorary Cambridge degree was conferred upon Louis Dollo (principal scientist at the Royal Museum of Natural History, Brussels) who was the scientific describer of this amazing fossil skeleton. "Dollo's Law" of the irreversibility of evolution was also an important contribution to evolutionary studies at this time.

The original skeleton was part of an extraordinary horde of 39 nearly complete skeletons found in a mine at the colliery of Bernissart (near Mons in southern Belgium) in the late 1870s.

During the reconstruction of this skeleton and its mounting for exhibition in Brussels (one of the first complete dinosaur skeletons ever viewed), all of which was supervised by a young Louis Dollo, a few mistakes were made. One of these mistakes is being rectified at present. The dinosaur's hip bones (known technically as *ischia*) were inadvertently swapped (left for right). Every cast of this dinosaur in the world (and there are specimens in Buenos Aires, London, Moscow, New York, Oxford, and Paris) has this same mistake perpetuated. However as part of the renovation of the gallery the Museum has asked **Shelford Engineering** to step in and make new armatures so that the hip bones are where they should be.

Malcolm Hurst (Shelford Engineering) said: "When we were asked to quote on this unusual job it was greeted with interest and enthusiasm from the small team of engineers. My first thoughts were to design a steelwork support system based on the original steelwork. Together with engineer Terry Mynott we agreed to use three original holes in the existing steel frame would give a datum start point; from this point with minimum drilling on site the basic supports were manufactured with advice from the museum staff and Dr David Norman. Bends and different design techniques were tried and tested until the finished position was achieved. The team found the work to be very enjoyable and had a real sense of achievement when standing back to see the end result."

Dr David Norman (Museum Director) commented: "Having spent the early part of my career studying this dinosaur in considerable detail I am delighted to have an opportunity to correct one of the glaring errors in its anatomy, thanks to money from the **MLA's Designation Challenge Fund**, and skills of Shelford Engineering."

Notes for editors:

The Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences

Downing Street, Cambridge enquiries: 01223 333456 (www.sedgwickmuseum.org). The Sedgwick has more than one million fossils in its collection; these range from the earliest forms of life, dating back more than 3,000 000,000 years ago, to the remarkable wildlife that roamed the Fens less than 150,000 years ago. Displays include a gallery of minerals and gemstones, the world's largest spider, fossil plants, huge marine reptiles from the Jurassic Period, dinosaurs and Cambridgeshire's very own *Hippopotamus*.

MLA

MLA is the national development agency for museums, libraries and archives, advising the government on policy and priorities for the sector. MLA's roles are to provide

strategic leadership, to act as a powerful advocate, to develop capacity and to promote innovation and change. www.mla.gov.uk

The Designation Scheme

The Designation Scheme, managed by MLA, aims to identify and celebrate the best museum, library and archive collections in England; those that are deemed to be of outstanding national and international importance. The Scheme recognises that organisations with Designated collections care for a significant part of England's cultural heritage.

Shelford Engineering

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