

Wouter & Michael's Solo Newsletter

Monday 20 Dec 2021

What's On

Sat 25 Dec - Christmas Day

A very Merry Christmas to all our friends this festive season. Saturday is a public holiday here in Indonesia.

Coming Up

Sat 1 Jan New Years Day

The News This Week

Kropfenstein Cave Castle

Kropfenstein Castle is a ruined *höhenburg* (hillfort) type castle, located on the edge of a vertically sloping rock face in the municipality of Waltensburg/Vuorz, Switzerland.

Little evidence survives as to the provenance of the castle; however, dendrochronological dating of architectural timbers suggests that Kropfenstein was constructed around 1312. Cave castles first appeared in Switzerland in the 14th and 15th centuries, utilising natural caves and grottos for the construction of residential or refuge castles.



Kropfenstein Cave Castle

The castle's plan is divided by two transverse walls containing several rooms, consisting of living quarters, a kitchen and store rooms. The castle gate is on the narrowest side and leads to the basement of what was originally a three-story structure with remnants of beam holes and windows with seating niches.



Kropfenstein Castle follows the edge of the cliff that makes its shape very irregular in appearance, utilising an overhanging rock shelf in which the fortifications were positioned to serve as a defensive residence for a local distinguished family.



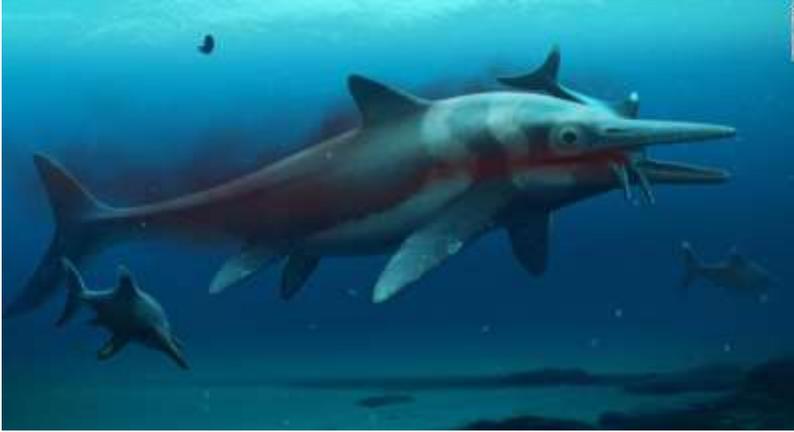
The Kropfenstein's were among the most respected families in the region in the late Middle Ages

The name of Kropfenstein goes back to the Middle High German word *Kropf* (meaning an outgrowth of the neck or growth) and is likely associated with the small noble family of von Kropfenstein from Luven in the district of Surselva that may have built or acquired the castle. The Kropfenstein's were among the most respected families in the Bündner Oberland in the late Middle Ages, first appearing in historical records during the 14th century

with a Bürkli von Kropfenstein mentioned in 1335. The Kropfenstein line died out in the 15th century whilst a branch of the family continued to live in Luven, resulting in Kropfenstein Castle falling into disrepair and being eventually abandoned.

UK's 180 Million-year-old Sea Dragon

What started as routine maintenance on a U.K. reservoir quickly shifted to a major paleontological dig when workers discovered a massive, 180 million-year-old ichthyosaur fossil at the bottom of the lake.



The find happened last February during routine draining of a lagoon island at Rutland Water Nature Reserve that was set for re-landscaping. The fossil, colloquially known as Sea Dragon, is approximately 10 metres long and its skull weighs about one tonne, making it the largest and most complete skeleton of its kind found to date in the U.K. It's also thought to be the first ichthyosaur of its specific species (*Temnodontosaurus trigonodon*) found in the country.

An artist's reconstruction of the fossil, nicknamed the "Rutland Sea Dragon."

"It's the most complete and larger than any dinosaur skeleton ever found here, so it's a mega-find for so many reasons," said paleontologist Dean Lomax, who led the excavation. "During this time period, it would have been right at the top of the food chain. It's an ultimate apex predator, perhaps one of the biggest animals in the sea worldwide."

The massive fossil was spotted by a couple of conservation team workers, who noticed what looked like pipes sticking up out of the mud. Upon further examination, they realized they had unearthed organic material and decided it was probably bones. Every day is different when you work on a nature reserve, but nothing could have prepared the reserves team at Rutland Water Nature Reserve for the day when they made the palaeontological discovery of a lifetime!

Ichthyosaurs first appeared around 250 million years ago and went extinct 90 million years ago. The marine animals range anywhere from one to 25 metres in length and resembled dolphins in general body shape. Two incomplete and much smaller ichthyosaurs were found during the construction of Rutland Water in the 1970s, but the latest discovery is the first complete skeleton. Researchers said that they also discovered the vertebrae of several other ichthyosaurs during the main dig.



Rutland Water Nature Reserve's Sea Dragon

The remains of the massive skeleton were excavated in August and September of last year by a team of expert paleontologists from around the U.K. "It is a truly unprecedented discovery and one of the greatest finds in British paleontological history," Lomax said. "I thought I found a dinosaur" is not something you hear every day."

Rewards For Getting This Far



Quote: "Money won't create success, the freedom to make it will." – South African leader Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)

Thought for the week: The light at the end of the tunnel is usually a 'No Exit' sign.

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Nelson Mandela

