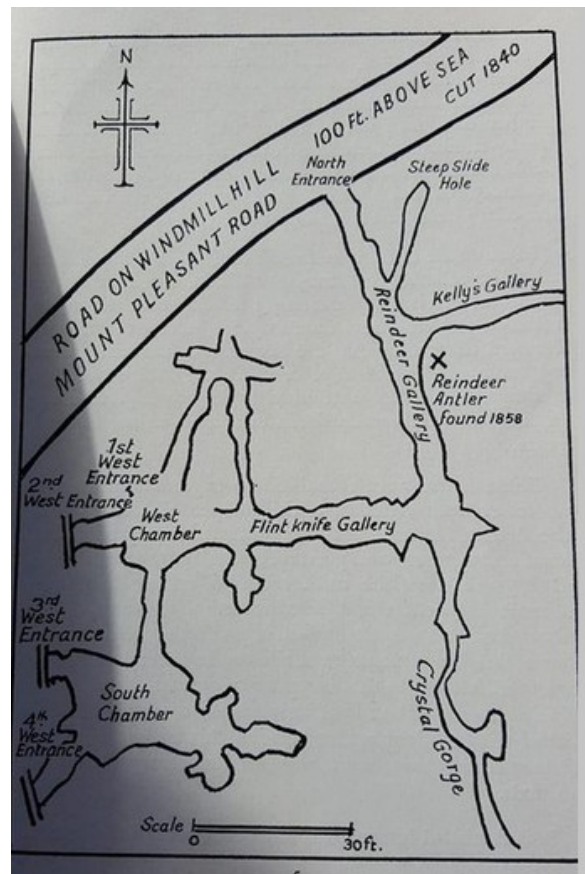


12 January

And God made two great lights;
the greater light to rule the day,
and the lesser light to rule the night:
he made the stars also. Genesis 1:16

Some geology¹

How exciting it would be to have a cave right underneath your house! If you lived at 107 Mount Pleasant Road in Brixham, Devon that is exactly what you would have. This house, in the terraces that line that steep narrow street, has an entrance in front of it that looks rather like the way into an ordinary cellar. However, it is not a cellar that stands behind that innocent looking metal grille but the “North Entrance” to a limestone cave system in which some fascinating finds were made in the nineteenth century, many of which are now housed in the British Museum. For many years it was open to the public as a visitor attraction. One article I read even describes it as “...one of the most important sites in the history of science.”²



It was Mr Philp, a builder, who in 1858 while constructing the terrace of houses in Mount Pleasant Road, found the caves while investigating the disappearance of a pickaxe. It was soon realised that, because the caves had been unknown and undisturbed for so long, they should be scientifically investigated. The Geological Society of London set up a committee to investigate the cave. They leased it from Mr Philp and geologist William Pengelly (1812–1894) went to investigate.



William Pengelly was born on **12th January**. He was an amateur geologist and if you look him up you will find his claim to fame is that he was “one of the first to contribute proof that the Biblical chronology of the earth calculated by Archbishop James Ussher was incorrect.”

What Pengelly found in the cave he catalogued with great care. The team worked layer by layer uncovering the soil and limestone rubble and carefully mapping the finds in three dimensions. Then he presented the artifacts to the British Museum or as to was then called, Christie's Museum, in 1858/59. Over the next few decades he continued to write up his findings in leading publications.

But what had he found? Why did it affect the work of Archbishop Usher?

We learned about this interesting Archbishop earlier this month³ and if you look back at that lesson you will see that this erudite and vastly intelligent scholar is famous for his work on the chronology of the Bible. He put his expertise in ancient languages and his encyclopedic knowledge of ancient calendars to use in calculating the date of the flood of Genesis and the creation of the world itself. Whether the date he arrived at is absolutely correct may be open to discussion, although it is

¹ Information from <https://creation.com/pengelly-cave-excavations> and other sources.

² *Lithics*: the Journal of the Lithic Studies Society 11, 24-31. 1991.

³ See the lesson for 4th January.

perfectly reasonable. However, what is indisputable is that he was absolutely correct in saying that the Bible itself puts these events within roughly the time frame he suggests and that the earth cannot be, according to the Bible, more than about 6,000 years old.

In the cave system now below 107 Mount Pleasant Road William Pengelly found over 1600 bones. Some had been split to extract the marrow and others were thought to have been gnawed by animals. He also found 32 flints. These, he said, he was sure were tools crafted by primitive people.

At this time geologists and others were searching for evidence that mankind had lived on the earth well before the time frame allowed by the Bible (and set out so ably by Archbishop Ussher). The finding of the cave and the publication of Pengelly's report came at an interesting time. In 1859 Charles Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. This set out a challenge to the biblical narrative, paving the way for the removal of God altogether both in the creation of the universe and ultimately in every other sphere of human thinking.

Pengelly's finds were taken as evidence that man had been on earth well before 6,000 years ago. For Darwin's evolution to have taken place a much longer period of time than 6,000 years was needed and Pengelly's claim about the cave finds backed up this idea.

Some reasoning used to reach that conclusion seems very odd. Stalagmites were found above some of the bones and supposed artifacts for instance. One stalagmite was famous because it had a reindeer bone embedded in it. Yet the Victorian geologists never thought to conclude from this that stalactites therefore formed more quickly under some circumstances than they might have imagined. Even those who protested about the way the finds were interpreted seem to have been barking up the wrong tree, trying to argue that the animals had been in the caves for long ages but not people.⁴ Charles Lyell's uniformitarian geology was becoming all the rage and no one wanted evidence to the contrary. For Lyell, as we will see/saw in November,⁵ claimed that in geology, the present was the key to the past and that whatever we see around us must have been formed by processes which we can still observe. Thus if a stalactite grows slowly now, it must always have grown at the same rate. Measure the rate of increase now and you can extrapolate back arriving at dates much older the 6,000 years of the Bible. But this is making an error because it is not known that the rates are the same. It is also not known whether amounts of lime and other materials in the water that dripped onto the stalagmite was the same in the past nor is it known at what rates the water dripped.



In reality the evidence found in the cave proves only that people once lived alongside mammals that no longer exist in Britain.

⁴ See *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, or Philosophical Journal of Great Britain. Edited by the Honorary Secretary, Capt. F. W. H. Petrie, F.R.S.L., &c. Vol. XI. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/jtvi/1877_001.pdf

⁵ See lesson for 14th November.

In the Ice Age⁶ mankind lived alongside the large mammals, such as the mammoth and rhinoceros, in Britain and Europe. They had arrived in these locations after migrating from the Plain of Shiner after the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel as described in Genesis. If they used stone tools it was because these circumstances meant they did not know where to find iron ore deposits or how to make use of them.

The cave is no longer open to the public but a mystery remains. Some photos of the cave⁷ appeared on social media in 2017 (long after the cave closed to the public) posted by a plumber who had been to 107 Mount Pleasant to fit a new boiler and had been allowed to enter the cavern.⁸ His pictures include the two of glass display cases on the previous page. They look as if they contain what are presumably labelled finds from the cave. The cases look in poor condition. Are they still there rotting away quietly underground? If this really is “one of the most important sites in the history of science” I wonder why it is being left to decay. Could it be that embarrassing reindeer bone? Or is there something even more exciting lurking under number 107 that makes the organisations that usually snap up “national treasures” disinterested? You can't imagine Stonehenge being left to rot in private hands, can you? But there, perhaps I have too vivid an imagination. If you enjoy writing exciting stories, an imaginary adventure exploring this cavern would make a good topic. I feel tempted to have a go myself:

For years now our family has holidayed in Brixham in glorious Devon. We always stay at the same camp site. But last year my dad had an idea. Mum had found it hard work with the tent in the wet weather we'd had the previous year so he decided we'd rent a house this year instead. “Mount Pleasant Road,” he said looking at the brochure, “that sounds rather nice. Good views from up there, if I remember rightly.”

Even as he said it a little thrill went through me. Mount Pleasant Road! The name of the narrow little street stuck in my mind. You see I'd noticed something in that street every time we'd walked along it...

Can you finish the job for me?

Something to read from history

The statesman, economist and philosopher, Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was born on 12th January. He was a man whose ideas were in many ways very wise. He is particularly famous for having foreseen the rise of Napoleon. This is how it happened:



One of the most interesting Welshmen of the eighteenth century was the statistician and philosopher Richard Price. He spent most of his adult life in London but his ideas were typical in some ways of the thinking of many Nonconformists in Wales. He argued for the removal of all the remaining restrictions on Nonconformists and the reform of Parliament. He welcomed the American Revolution, seeing it as a struggle for liberty in England as well as in America. At the end of his life he welcomed the French Revolution and preached a sermon in 1788 *On the Love of Country* in which he argued that the people were sovereign and the king was their servant, maintained by them. In 1790, Edmund Burke... wrote *Reflections on the French Revolution* in reply to Price's sermon. In this book he foresaw the violent course which the revolution would take. “Revolution can only lead to bloodshed and disorder,” he wrote, “They in turn will give place to a military tyrant.” His prediction turned out to be true. Burke's book was very popular. The king approved of it and said that he wanted every gentleman to read it. Public opinion turned firmly against the revolutionaries. There began to be great alarm lest similar upheavals should take place in England with the

6 Look out for more information about the Ice Age(s) in the lesson for 24th January.

7 <https://davesworld.proboards.com/thread/646/brixham-answer-kents-cavern?page=1&scrollTo=1752>

8 Copyright permission research for the images of the display cases on the previous page is on going.

encouragement of the French. Not only did the nobles, merchants and manufacturers feel threatened. Shopkeepers and ordinary working men also realised the danger. Thomas Paine [about whom you can read more next month]⁹ wrote a reply to Burke's book called *The Rights of Man* in which he attacked the idea of monarchy and aristocracy.¹⁰

Can you pick out the two words in the highlighted paragraph above that Burke used which foreshadowed Napoleon?



The colouring picture below shows Napoleon at the Battle of Lodi Bridge. I think it is based on the painting by Louis-François Lejeune of which there is a detail below.



9 See the lesson for 9th February.

10 Adapted from *The Story of God's Dealings with our Nation* Volume 2 which is available here: <https://www.creationresearchstore.com/s/search?q=Dealings> .