

The old sea cliff Whitecliff

SZ 028 907



The old sea cliff before landfill

This old sea-cliff has now partly disappeared under the landfill of the recreation ground. The white clay is named the Parkstone Clay, the highest clay in the Poole Formation, previously known as the Pipe Clay Series. The other clays are Broadstone, Oakdale and Creekmoor, named from the areas of Poole where the clay reaches the surface.



The old sea cliff RIG Site 2010

The clays and sands of the Poole Formation were deposited as sediments in a river estuary about 35 to 40 million years ago. The river started in the area which is now Devon and

Cornwall, eroding the land and carrying debris eastward. Larger debris and pebbles were deposited first, then as the river slowed in a wide valley the sand was deposited with the lighter silt and clay particles being carried the furthest until the river reached the sea.

There were variations in sea level over this great length of time so that the clays were deposited when the sea level was high, forming lagoons, and the sands were deposited when the sea level was low leaving an open river valley. This has resulted in repetitions of sand and clay sequences that have been given local names.



Fossil palm leaf from the Pipe Clay Series (Dorset County Museum)

The several different clays from the Poole Formation were used for bricks, drainage pipes, domestic pottery, terracotta and the small smoking pipes which gave the name Pipe Clay Series to this group.



19th century clay pipe

During the 19th and 20th centuries there were over 50 'potteries' in the Borough of Poole manufacturing the different products from the

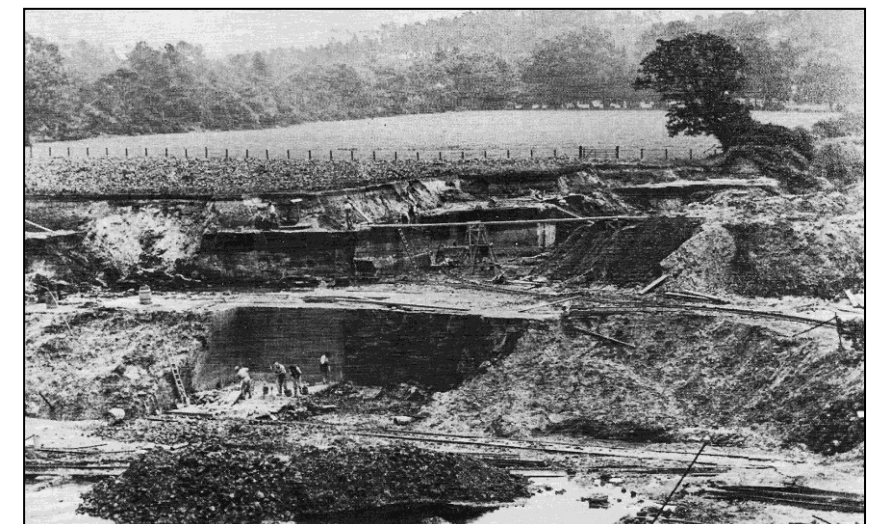
The climate at that time was subtropical with ferns, magnolia, pine trees, many insects and small mammals living in the river valley.

different beds of clay, according to their clay, organic or mineral suitability.



The park gates

The white clay of the Parkstone Clay was particularly suitable for terracotta. The panels and the eagle on the Park gates are made of terracotta. The moulds were still kept in the South Western Potteries (500 metres east of Whitecliff recreation ground) until it closed in the 1960's, but were then buried under the housing development.



The clay pit at South Western Potteries

During the working life of the pottery the workers dug a deep pit that could also reach the lower Broadstone Clay, which was suitable for drainage pipes.