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13.11.01.

# **WALKING WITH** **DINOSAURS IN** **TRIASSIC PARK...**

*"It's impossible to put into words what you feel like when you are handling dinosaur fossils that are hundreds of millions of years old," - Gordon Fletcher, Lecturer, University of Central Lancashire, Preston*

**PRESTON** sculptor Gordon Fletcher helped uncover the fossils of dinosaurs that are likely to have been the ancestors of giants like T Rex.

The University of Central Lancashire fine art lecturer also saw the remains of the oldest mammals in the world at the 'dig' in Argentina.

Gordon endured amazing extremes of temperatures when he camped out in a desert called 'The Valley of the Moon' to help scientists chip out fossils from the Triassic Period.

It pre-dates the infamous Jurassic era - immortalised in the three Stephen

Spielberg movies - by 70 million years.

“The interesting thing is that at this time dinosaurs and mammals were evolving side by side,” he explained.

“Then all of a sudden - for reasons that no-one is yet sure about - the dinosaurs began to dominate the earth.”

In the Triassic Period the largest dinosaurs ever reached was the size of an elephant - big enough but tiny compared to the likes of T Rex and Brontosaurus, which dominated the later Jurassic period.

Once these giants established themselves they ruled the world for tens of millions of years.

Gordon, who went to Argentina as part of a project funded by environmental charity Earthwatch, said: “It’s impossible to put into words what you feel like when you are handling dinosaur fossils that are hundreds of millions of years old.

“You do have this incredible sense of awe but you cannot grasp the time scales involved.”

Gordon was present when palaeontologists from the University of San Juan, Argentina, uncovered the skeletons of three baby Rhyncosaurs buried together – possibly indicating that these early dinosaurs raised their young in burrows.

He also saw the skulls of animals - possibly mammals - gently prised from 240-million year old rocks. If scientists confirm that they are indeed mammals they will be the oldest in the world.

Gordon took hundreds of photographs during the 12-day trip, and now plans to reflect his experiences in a series of special sculptures. Many of his art works are inspired by the natural environment - including the world’s oceans - which he experiences through his hobby of scuba diving.

He also intends to give illustrated talks to local groups and produce some documentary displays for museums in Argentina.

### Ends

Notes to editors:

- Gordon has slides of dinosaur fossils that may have been the ancestors of T Rex. He is happy to lend this to the media for reproduction with this article.