



Name: Peter Morgan.

Date: August 1987.

Location: South Haven, Skomer Island.

Title: Smelly Collections: Leatherback Turtle, 1987.

Memory:

“It pays to have a ‘strong stomach’ or a weak sense of smell as a vertebrate zoology museum curator. This was certainly witnessed by the result of two of the many calls received by the Department of Zoology at the National Museum of Wales.

The second call was news of a smaller animal than the Humpback Whale, but one with a more formidable smell!

In August 1987 a call from Anna Sutcliffe on Skomer Island informed me that she had swum out and lassoed a dead Leatherback Turtle, and with help had brought it ashore onto South Haven - surely the National Museum would be interested in now having it as a specimen.

What better excuse for a couple days on Skomer, so assisted by Piers Langhelt we set off, having determined that no illustration of the internal organs of Leatherback Turtle existed to help us. It was obvious on arrival that this would continue to be the case, as it had obviously been dead for some time!

We removed the carapace and gradually exposed the skeleton after which it was removed to North Haven for more detailed work. This was best done in the early hours after dawn before the smell became too obnoxious, however it did mean that the rest of the day could be used studying birds and seals on the island.

A week later the skeleton was removed, degreased professionally, and displayed on the island and elsewhere.

Peter Morgan”