Fossil hunter finds historic mine cart stuck in cliffside

A FOSSIL hunter got a little more than he bargained for when cliff erosion exposed a unique piece of Purbeck history.

Richard Field was thrilled to be one of the first people to note the historic find, a mine cart possibly dating back 150 years.

The remnant from Purbeck's shale mining days has been exposed 50ft up cliffs near to Rope Lake Head, to the east of Kimmeridge Bay.

Richard, 36, from Canford Heath, Poole, said: "I was out there walking under the cliffs looking for a few fossils and noticed a bit of track hanging out the cliff and what looked like a metal bucket next to it.

"When I looked closer it turned out it was a mine cart. I think the track has been visible for a while, but when I reported it to the county council they said I was the first person to note the mine cart."

By Jim Durkin

Richard said: "After 150 years of weather and erosion the cart has been exposed, fully intact, with wheels and tipping lever.

"It is even standing on the original track - the only thing is it is 50 ft up in the air embedded in the rock face."

Richard, who has walked the Jurassic Coast cliffs since he was a child, believes the cart belongs to an era when shale mining took place in the area.

He added: "Given the erosion, it won't be staying up there forever. At some point it will come crashing down onto the rocks below."

A Dorset County Council spokesman said: "We are assessing the situation, to see if anything can be done. It is a remarkable find, but at this stage recording it could be all we can do."