

Summary of Hadland et al, 2021 "The youngest dinosaur footprints from England and their palaeoenvironmental implications"

### **Fossilised footprints found on the foreshore in Folkestone**

*Summary by Andrew Botsford*

Footprints in Folkestone represent the last recorded occurrence of dinosaurs walking on land in the United Kingdom. The trace fossils, found in the Albian Folkestone Formation, add considerably to our knowledge of the late Early Cretaceous dinosaurs of southern England. Body fossils have been found in younger units but are rare and usually occur in small fragments.

The footprints were first reported in 2012 but this recent work has identified more sets and attempted to identify the creatures which took a stroll along a beach more than 100 million years ago. Six tracks containing two or more prints have been described, each spanning 2m or more in length. The specimens show a range of diagnostic features including size, print sharpness, rounding of impressions, and the number and size of digit imprints. They are clearly of varied form with the theropod imprint a particularly well-preserved example.

Candidate dinosaurs responsible for leaving the footprints include a range of ornithomimids (two legged herbivores), ankylosaurs (armoured four-legged herbivores), and large theropods (hollow boned, mainly carnivorous, predators).

These animals lived during a time of high global sea level that created many shallow seas across the world. The Folkestone Formation, as part of the larger Lower Greensand Group, represents deposits of a seaway connecting the prehistoric Boreal, Atlantic and Tethys oceans. The presence of land-based dinosaur footprints provides unequivocal evidence of an exposed environment, which is supported by evidence for wind abrasion. The variety of print styles described points to a wide range of dinosaur groups roaming the warm beaches of mid Cretaceous times.



[Walking with dinosaurs on the beach by maniraptora on DeviantArt](#)