

# **The evolution of the British landscape: geological and archaeological perspectives**

## **1. The geological foundations of the British landscape**

The main focus of the introductory lecture is on the Caledonian, Acadian and Variscan orogenies and the impact of the resulting structures on the present day landscape. Transgression of the sea during Jurassic times led to a long period of predominantly marine conditions which terminated at the end of the Cretaceous. Jurassic and Cretaceous sedimentary rocks form the landscape of much of southern England.

## **2. The Early Tertiary volcanoes of the British Isles**

The first part of the lecture concerns the development of ideas concerning the Tertiary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the early Tertiary much of the British Isles became a landmass, probably due to magmatic processes related to the opening of the Atlantic Ocean. In Britain the main area of magmatic activity took place in NW Scotland and the volcanicity of this classic area is described. The lecture concludes with a consideration of climatic variation during the Tertiary.

## **3. Formation of the Alps and the influence of Alpine tectonics on Britain.**

The Alps have been a classic area for the study of mountain building and we begin by looking at how ideas developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Evidence for the impact of Alpine tectonism on southern Britain is examined. The lecture concludes with a look at the changes in vegetation during Tertiary times and the establishment of a pre-Pleistocene drainage pattern.

## **4. The Pleistocene: a landscape transformed by ice**

The first part of the lecture concerns the extent of glaciation in the British Isles with particular emphasis on glacial deposits in the Welsh Borderland. The second part looks at the evidence for early human occupation.

## **5. After the ice: enter some Stone Age hunters**

We begin by looking at the changing geography of Britain as a consequence of glacial activity and the subsequent changes in sea level. We then consider post-glacial vegetation and mega-fauna. Finally, we look at the evidence for early stone age hunters.

## **6. The Neolithic period and Early Bronze Age**

The main emphasis is on Neolithic belief systems and the selection by Neolithic people of sacred sites within the landscape. We see the first major monuments built from stone. The felling of trees and introduction of farming begins to transform the landscape.

## **7. The Iron Age: a landscape of hillforts and farms**

Human activity has now transformed the landscape so that the forests are much reduced and farming is widespread. Rapidly rising population and the development of a hierarchical society led to increasing tribal conflict. Hillforts were constructed in a range of environments and for differing purposes and remain a feature in the landscape.

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