



CENTRAL SCOTLAND REGIONAL GROUP
of the
GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Where was Odysseus' homeland?

Tuesday 19th February 2008

The meeting will begin at 6:15pm

Grant Institute,
The King's Buildings,
West Mains Road,
Edinburgh
EH9 3JW

John Underhill will present the geological, geomorphological and geophysical evidence for relocating Homer's Ithaca.

The geographical description of Ithaca in Homer's Odyssey has long provoked controversy and remains very puzzling.

"Around are many islands, close to each other, Doulichion and Same and wooded Zacynthos. Ithaca itself lies low, furthest to sea towards dusk; the rest, apart, face dawn and sun."
Odyssey 9.19-26

While Zacynthos continues to exist today, and almost all experts regard "Same" as present-day Kefalonia, the island of "Doulichion" has never been traced: it has remained a mystery for 3,000 years. The application of modern geoscience entered the analysis in 2003 in an attempt to address the all-important question: could a marine channel, subsequently described by Strabo as a low-lying isthmus, have separated Paliki, the westernmost peninsula of Kefalonia, from the rest of the island during the late Bronze Age? If it did, Paliki would then have been a free-standing island that precisely met Homer's description: "lies low, furthest to the sea towards dusk".

John Underhill has been leading the geological, geophysical and geomorphological tests of the theory that the Paliki Peninsula in Western Kefalonia might have been a freestanding island as recently as 3,000 years ago. Confirmation of that hypothesis would have dramatic ramifications for our understanding of Classical Greece. Underhill has been an AAPG member since 1983, a Matson Award recipient and an AAPG Distinguished Lecturer and Award winner. He holds a BSc in Geology from Bristol University and a PhD from the University of Wales. He worked for Shell International for five years before joining the University of Edinburgh, where he holds the Chair of Stratigraphy. He has done significant research into the geology and geomorphology of Greece, and in his spare time referees football matches in the Scottish Premier League.

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