

Shell London Lecture Series: Stranger than Fiction: Worlds around and beneath us

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Geological Society of London

Dwarfism in Animals on Islands



SPEAKER: *Victoria Herridge, Natural History Museum*

The extinct dwarf elephants of the Mediterranean are remarkable. They evolved many times, on many islands, from large mainland species such as the 4-metre tall straight-tusked elephant. Some of these dwarf elephant species were just 1-metre tall as adults, making them the smallest elephants to have ever existed. But although we know that dwarf elephants evolved in response to the island environment, we still don't fully understand the causes. A big part of this problem is that we simply do not know how old these elephant fossils are: some of the best fossil evidence was collected over 100 years ago, before modern geological dating techniques were available. To change this, I've been seeking out sites excavated by Victorian and Edwardian naturalists such as Thomas Spratt, Andrew Leith Adams, Hugh Falconer and Dorothea Bate, so that we could bring modern methods to bear on their discoveries. In this talk, I will tell the story of those pioneering researchers, and how I came to follow in their footsteps with a team of geochronologists, and what our new findings might mean for our understanding of dwarf elephant evolution.

Date: Wednesday 11 September 2013

Timings: This lecture will be given at 3pm and 6pm on this day (with tea/coffee served for half an hour before each), so please let us know, when requesting a place, which talk you would like to attend.

Venue: The Geological Society of London, Burlington House

Entry to this lecture is free to all, but places are allocated on a ballot basis. Please call at reception (to your right) or contact the Society by post, phone, fax or email (see below).



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2013 Programme

9 January	Reconciling past and future worlds: Geology and ground engineering	<i>Jackie Skipper, Geotechnical Consulting Group</i>
27 February	Landslides and subsidence: Engineering geology in an age of austerity	<i>David Shilston, GSL President</i>
27 March	Exceptionally preserved fossils: Windows on the evolution of life	<i>David Siveter, University of Leicester</i>
17 April	Rivers under the sea	<i>Jeffrey Peakall, University of Leeds</i>
29 May	CCS – Capturing Global Opportunities	<i>Paul Garnham, CCS Project Manager, Shell</i>
3 July	Life at deep-sea hydrothermal vents: biodiversity in a new resource frontier	<i>Adrian Glover, Natural History Museum</i>
11 September	Dwarfism in animals on islands	<i>Victoria Herridge, Natural History Museum</i>
9 October	The Mars Science Laboratory mission: The Curiosity Rover's exploration of Gale Crater	<i>John Grotzinger, Caltech</i>
20 November	Shearwater: Geology Under Pressure	<i>Caroline Gill, Senior Production Geologist, Shell</i>
18 December	Lakes Beneath the Ice	<i>Martin Siegert, Edinburgh University</i>



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