

ODYSSEUS UNBOUND

THE SEARCH FOR HOMER'S ITHACA

Queens' College, Cambridge - Academic Saturday

October 7th 2006 14:00, Fitzpatrick Hall, Queens' College, Cambridge CB3 9ET

Where was Homer's Ithaca?

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are two of the oldest works in Western literature, describing a Bronze Age world over 3,000 years ago. For centuries both of these poems were believed to have been set in an imaginary landscape, but then Schliemann discovered Troy in the 1870s and triggered a major re-evaluation of the *Iliad*. However, Homer's Ithaca has remained elusive, with the Ionian island that is today called Ithaki bearing little resemblance to the descriptions in the *Odyssey*.

But in September 2005 a radical new identification for the location of Homer's Ithaca was proposed by three British researchers: James Diggle, Professor of Greek and Latin at Cambridge University and a Fellow of Queens' College; John Underhill, Professor of Geology at Edinburgh University; and Robert Bittlestone, Chairman of the management consultancy Metapraxis and an alumnus of Christ's College, Cambridge.

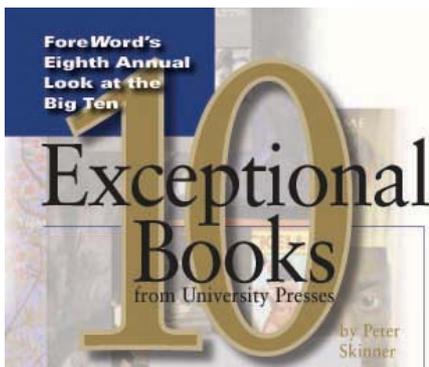
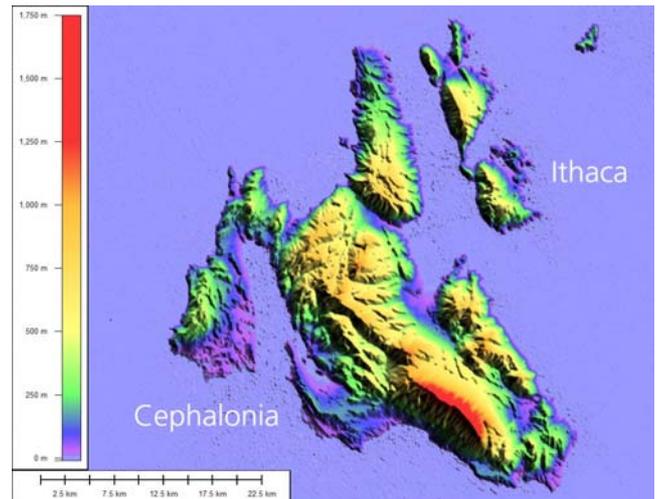


Their book describing this discovery, ***Odysseus Unbound: The Search for Homer's Ithaca*** was published by Cambridge University Press the following month and by Christmas it had already sold out its first printing, with sales approaching 10,000 copies. Their proposals are gaining ground as more evidence emerges from the Ionian islands, and an increasing number of classicists worldwide are beginning to contemplate the possibility that the poet of the *Odyssey* might have had direct knowledge of Ithaca's landscape.

On October 7th James Diggle and Robert Bittlestone will deliver a presentation on the geological, classical and archaeological discoveries that are described in the book. By that time John Underhill's new paper in *Geoscientist* will have been published with updated news of the latest year of researches on Cephalonia, and highlights from this will also be included in the presentation.

The talk will be illustrated throughout with slides, satellite photography and computer animations, and the content is aimed at a non-specialist audience. The speakers will answer questions at the end and they will be available for further informal discussions and to sign copies of the book. Copies will be available for purchase at the event at a special Cambridge Alumni discount, and the book is also on sale at the Cambridge University Press bookshop at 1 Trinity Street, at Amazon and at other major bookshops (ISBN 0521853575).

Reviews: “*Odysseus Unbound* has made the final link between real location and Homeric description”... “Paliki-as-island is a sensational hypothesis”... “I’ve just finished reading *Odysseus Unbound* and I have to say that the experience was utterly enthralling from start to finish”... “A fascinating and compelling book”... “Bittlestone has had the benefit of expert advice from James Diggle, probably the greatest living Hellenist, and John Underhill, professor at the University of Edinburgh (well known to football fans: he referees)”... “Impossible to put down, more impossible still to forget once you have read it”... “One of the most compelling books I have read for ages – a gripping detective story, gradually unfolding layer by layer”... “Epic begets epic: stupendous and thought-provoking”... “The photos are beautiful, the logic is elegant, the science is very educational, and the conclusion is convincing.”



The Website: At www.odysseus-unbound.org you can read about the project so far and the plans for future work. At the **Reviews** page you can follow the emerging classical controversy: can Odysseus' island be identified this closely? If so, how could Homer have known the geography so well? The online **Forum** enables you to participate in this debate, while TV, radio and newspaper reports from all over the world can be accessed on the **Press** page, together with a diary of recent and forthcoming **Events**. And if you are sufficiently intrigued to decide to go there, the **Visit** page will help you plan your journey.

The event is open to members and guests of Queens' College. For further information and to reserve a place at Academic Saturday, contact the Alumni & Development Office, Queens' College, Cambridge (01223 331944, alumni@queens.cam.ac.uk).

www.odysseus-unbound.org

