

abstract

THE THAMES THROUGH TIME



This talk will focus on the origins, past environments and early human inhabitants of London's iconic River Thames, tracing its astonishing story through the last two million years until the end of the last Ice Age, around 10 000 years ago.

DRAMATIC CHANGES

The Thames has witnessed dramatic changes throughout the course of its evolution that are intimately bound up with climate change and tectonic processes. For much of its history, the ancestral Thames was a substantially larger river, flowing in a more northerly route than today and entering the North Sea embayment to the north of a chalk landbridge connecting Britain to mainland Europe. The effects of major glaciation later destroyed that connection, leading to catastrophic overflow from ice-dammed lakes and diverting the Thames into its present course. Driven largely by glacial-interglacial climatic cycles combined with uplift, the river has laid down a stacked 'staircase' of terrace sediments that form one of the most important archives of Pleistocene environmental change anywhere in the world.

Rich remains of ice age mammals, plants, shells and other fossils from these sands and gravels provide a uniquely detailed insight into the changing landscape of Britain over the last half a million years. Some of the most remarkable sites are found in central London itself, including Trafalgar Square, where hippos, rhinos and elephants roamed the banks of the Thames 125 000 years ago. In addition, the Thames valley has acted as a conduit for early human movements, providing raw materials for

stone tool manufacture and lush environments for hunting animals. Danielle Schreve will draw together these different lines of evidence and present the latest scientific advances in our understanding of the Thames past, with reference to both the Oxford area and the wider Thames valley.

Professor Danielle Schreve
Royal Holloway, University of London

The poster has a blue background with a photograph of a river scene at sunset. In the top left corner is a small portrait of Professor Danielle Schreve. To the right of the portrait, the text 'PROFESSOR DANIELLE SCHREVE ROYAL HOLLOWAY' is written in yellow. Below the portrait, the title 'THE THAMES THROUGH TIME' is written in white. At the bottom right, the date and time '7.30pm MARCH 21' are written in yellow, followed by the location 'DEPARTMENT OF EARTH SCIENCES SOUTH PARKS ROAD OXFORD' in yellow. The Oxford Geology Group logo is in the bottom left corner, and the website 'www.oxgg.org.uk' is at the bottom center.