Birmingham Archaeologists Discover Climate Change is Nothing New

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Climate change is a phenomenon that has occurred intermittently through time - and it will continue to affect the earth in this cyclical pattern, scientists at the University of Birmingham have discovered.

Whilst the affects of current global warning will be significant, climate change has been occurring for thousands of years.

Researchers from the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity have found that humans have always adapted to climate change by either abandoning settlements or by adapting their economies. On Bodmin Moor they have been working on Bronze Age remains that have been abandoned and this can be attributed to climatic decline in around 1000 BC.

Around 1000 BC the deterioration of the climate becoming colder and wetter, is marked by the abandonment of settlements and field systems in a number of upland areas - this is seen mostly on Dartmoor. Research on the adjacent Bodmin Moor does not show such dramatic indications of abandonment, rather a more adaptive response to climate change such as different ways of farming and seasonal occupation of the landscape.

During the last glacial period much of the area now covered by the North Sea was inhabited dry land as water that was trapped in the ice sheets meant that sea levels were much lower than today. Evidence of animal remains and artefacts that have been brought to the surface by dredging and trawling demonstrate the richness of this once inhabited environment. However sea levels rose due to climate change in 4000 BC and the settlers had to move to higher land.

Henry Chapman of Birmingham Archaeology says, “Our research tells us that climate change has been happening over thousands of years and humans, who are arguably the most adaptive species, have found ways of dealing with these changes either by abandoning their settlements and setting up elsewhere or by changing their living habits.”

Ben Gearey, who also worked on the project, says, “The evidence suggests that people can and have coped with climate change in the past and this indicates valuable lessons for our own future.”

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Notes to Editors

Research TV - Note to Broadcast Media: Moving footage/interviews are available free of charge as a package to broadcast media via Research TV, due for streaming via APTN on 15 May from 12.15-12.30 GMT. Contact http://www.Research-TV.com for details / to request footage.

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