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New book brings a submerged world to life

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The lost world of British hunter-gatherers is brought to life in a new book published this week. Professor Vince Gaffney and colleagues from the University of Birmingham uncovers the incredible history of Doggerland a country now sunk beneath the North Sea which once linked the Yorkshire coast with a stretch of Continental Europe from Denmark to Normandy.

6000 years ago this lost world was inhabited by a thriving community of Mesolithic hunter-gathers living and hunting, just as they did in many other areas of northern Europe.

The book describes how the Birmingham team used oil industry technology to scan the seabed, gathering millions of data points across 23,000km² of the North Sea. This allowed them to reconstruct the old land surface, now submerged beneath metres of marine sediment and tens of metres of sea water.

Professor Gaffney comments: “Doggerland is in many ways an archaeological treasure trove: a Mesolithic landscape that is incredibly well preserved thanks to the changing climate.

The challenge for us was to find a way to uncover the detail so it is useful. Using 3D seismic data we were able to see the networks of valleys, rivers and communities that would have been inhabited 6000 years ago.”

The book also chronicles the terrible events which brought an end to this landscape. By c 6000 BC, everything had begun to change for the communities living there. Rising sea levels due to a rise in temperature and melting glaciers drowned Doggerland and its inhabitants were driven to higher ground.

Professor Gaffney adds: “Although Mesolithic societies seem incredibly removed from the modern day the fate of Doggerland does provide a stark warning for us today.

The submersion of Doggerland was the last time inhabited areas of land were lost because of changes in climate. This reminds us of our obligations to future generations who may lose the plains, valleys and rivers familiar to our land surface today if global warming is not arrested.”

Europe’s Lost World: The Rediscovery of Doggerland is published by the CBA

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Notes to Editors

Publication Details

Europe’s Lost World: The Rediscovery of Doggerland Vincent Gaffney, Simon Fitch and David Smith

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This book is published by the CBA, St Mary’s House, 66 Bootham, York, YO30 7BZ , tel: 01904 671417. For a complimentary copy for review purposes, please contact press@britarch.ac.uk

Visit the Britarch **website (http://www.britarch.ac.uk/books)** for more information.

The Doggerland Team

Professor Vince Gaffney holds the Chair in Landscape Archaeology and Geomatics in the Institute for Archaeology and Antiquity at the University of Birmingham where he is also Director of VISTA, the IBM Visual and Spatial Technology Centre (www.vista.bham.ac.uk).

Simon Fitch works for VISTA and maintains an active interest in the use of visual and immersive technologies in the investigation of marine geophysical data, and has been an external advisor to geophysical software companies.

Dr David Smith is an environmental archaeologist at the University of Birmingham with over 15 years’ experience providing archaeoentomological consultancy to rescue and research excavations in the British Isles.

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