



# **HARROW & HILLINGDON GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

*A Local Group of the Geologists' Association*

*Founded 1973*

[www.hhgs.org.uk](http://www.hhgs.org.uk)

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## **Volcano Lecture Series**

**Non-members, please register by email: [contact@hhgs.org.uk](mailto:contact@hhgs.org.uk)**

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 8pm on Zoom**

### **“Volcanic Britain: Where, When & How”**

By Professor Nick Petford (Department of Earth Sciences, Durham University)

Even though it has no active volcanoes today, the United Kingdom has a long and ancient volcanic history. UK volcanism began hundreds of millions of years ago, when the land that now forms the British Isles was located near plate tectonic boundaries. The oldest volcanic rocks in mainland UK are found in Charnwood Forest, England. During the Ordovician and Silurian periods (c. 480–420 million years ago), volcanic activity helped form the upland regions in Wales and the Lake District, where volcanic outcrops are still visible today. Intrusive igneous rocks (age c. 300–270 My) are well exposed in SW Britain as granite batholiths hosting economically important ore deposits, and the Whin Sill in N. England, both formed during the latter stages of the Variscan Orogeny.



Cheesewring Quarry, Cornwall - photo by Eric Foster  
<https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2529929>



Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland  
[File:Giant's Causeway \(14\).JPG - Wikimedia Commons](#)

A final phase of volcanism took place much later, during the Paleogene Period around 60 million years ago, mainly affecting Scotland and Northern Ireland. This volcanism is linked to the opening of the North Atlantic Ocean. Famous features from this time include the basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland and volcanic and plutonic intrusions on the Western Scottish Isles. Although now extinct, the British landscape records clear evidence of a dramatic volcanic past.



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## **Professor Nick Petford, Durham University**



Trained initially as a Refrigeration Engineer, Nick has spent most of his working life in academia. He is former Vice Chancellor and CEO of the University of Northampton, and has worked previously at Bournemouth, Cambridge and Kingston Universities in a range of teaching and managerial roles. He is also an award winning Geologist and highly cited author, with over 300 published journal papers and articles. As a science broadcaster he has fronted documentaries on volcanoes and natural hazards for the BBC, Channel 4, National Geographic and The Weather Channel. He is currently Visiting Professor at Durham University and an Associate Fellow of Durham Energy Institute.