

UK GEO-HERITAGE

www.geolsoc.org.uk/100geosites



The islands of the UK and Ireland have been formed over many millions of years. Changes in sea level, spectacular earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and changing climate have all left their mark on UK geology.

In the last 700 million years, the UK has gradually drifted north from near the South Pole. As a result, the UK is an amazing place to see rocks of almost all geological ages in a relatively small area. The oldest are found in north west Scotland and Ireland, dating from before the Cambrian period, almost 3,000 million years old. The youngest rocks in the UK are found in south east England.

DID YOU KNOW?

520 million years ago, much of the Earth's landmass existed as the continents of Gondwana, Laurentia, Baltica and Siberia. Until the end of the Devonian, the north and south halves of what is now the UK were on different continents and separated by the Iapetus Ocean. The continents were joined as a result of collision during a period of tectonic activity called the Caledonian Orogeny.

Geological time chart

Eon / Period	Approximate age in millions of years (Ma)
Quaternary	Present day – 2.5
Neogene	2.5 - 23
Paleogene	23 - 66
Cretaceous	66 - 145
Jurassic	145 - 201
Triassic	201 - 252
Permian	252 - 298
Carboniferous	298 - 358
Devonian	358 - 419
Silurian	419 - 443
Ordovician	443 - 485
Cambrian	485 - 541
Precambrian	541 – 4,600

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UK map: Alexrk2 (Wikimedia)

OUTER HEBRIDES
Precambrian Lewisian gneiss



GLEN COE Silurian volcano,
shaped by Quaternary glaciation



GIANT'S CAUSEWAY
Paleogene basalt



SICCAR POINT
Silurian greywackes covered by
Devonian sandstone



ST BEES HEAD
Permian – Triassic sandstone



NATIONAL COAL MINING MUSEUM
Carboniferous coal



HARLECH DOME
Cambrian Mountains



WENLOCK EDGE
Silurian limestone



LYME REGIS
Jurassic fossils



WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER
Late Cretaceous chalk

