

Programme Three:

## Ice Age

**A**lan Titchmarsh investigates how the landscape of modern Britain was sculpted by events set in motion two million ago. He gets under the skin of the much misunderstood Neanderthal man, examines relics from the past and discovers that an ice sheet covering most of Britain actually stopped at London's Finchley Road tube station.

"For two million years, Britain was gripped by an Ice Age. We've all heard of it, but what was it like? How did the Ice Age, more than anything else in our history, shape the landscape we look out on today?" asks Alan.

The Ice Age was caused by events on the other side of the Atlantic. The continents of North and South America collided, affecting the direction and strength of the current now known as the Gulf Stream. Warm water from the Tropics flowed towards Britain, where rain gradually turned to snow in the north before ice engulfed the British Isles.

Armed with a geologist's microphone, Alan eavesdrops on the groans of a Norwegian glacier, and time-lapse photography reveals that glaciers are always on the move.

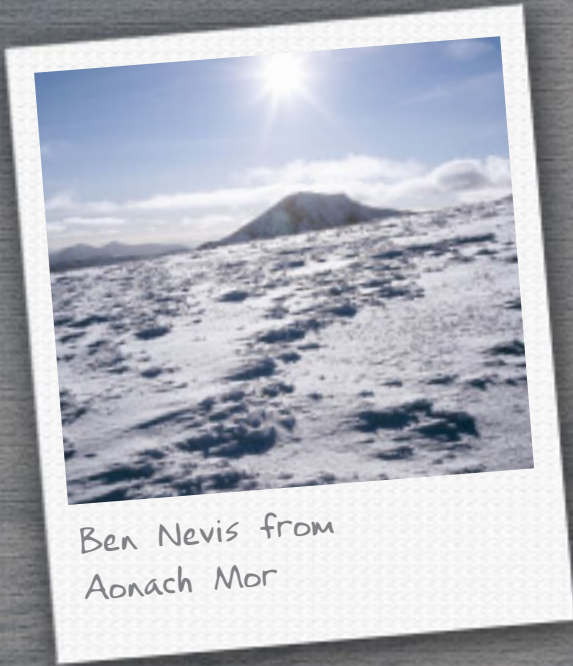
On a fishing trip in the North Sea, Alan nets further clues about Ice

Age Britain. An unexpected catch is the enormous tusk of a prehistoric mammoth, proving that the North Sea and English Channel were once a vast tundra, stretching between Britain and mainland Europe.

In London's Trafalgar Square, 19th-century builders found an extraordinary collection of bones, including those of hippos, hyenas and lions. This haul demonstrates that the Ice Age was not unrelentingly cold – 120,000 years ago the icy wilderness was replaced by a hot savannah. As Alan discovers, each of the 30 separate Ice Ages over the last two million years has been separated by an unusually warm period.

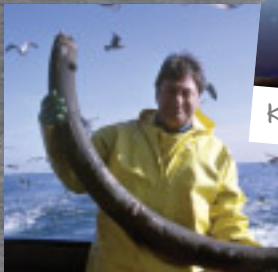
*The Big Freeze* also sees Alan transformed into a Neanderthal man to experience how well our Ice Age ancestors were adapted to the ice and snow. A quick stroll down London's Oxford Street fails to turn any heads, proving that – clad in modern-day clothes – the flat-nosed, high-browed creature could pass as a 21st-century man.

**Producer: Mary Colwell**



Ben Nevis from  
Aonach Mor

# "For two million years, Britain was gripped by an Ice Age"



Mammoth tusk  
trawled out of the  
North Sea



Killarney, Ireland

Programme Four:

# Islands Apart

**A**lan Titchmarsh ventures 50m below the English Channel, scales an ancient tree in the New Forest and stalks red deer in Scotland to tell the story of how island Britain was created.

“In just a few thousand years, the British landscape had been transformed – the great ice sheets had melted and in their place a great forest flourished. The sea level rose, flooding those great land bridges that once linked us to mainland Europe. From being on the fringes of a great continent, we were now a collection of green and fertile islands,” says Alan.

To retrace this amazing transformation, which started about 12,000 years ago, Alan searches for clues across the country. He discovers tropical nickar nuts while beach-combing in Scotland; finds palm trees growing in latitudes where polar bears should feel more at home; and witnesses elegant whooper swans in Cambridgeshire, who fly in from Siberia for Britain’s milder winters – all of which point to the warming influence of the Gulf Stream.

Once the ice had melted, Britain was re-colonised by flora and fauna. The first trees to get a foothold were those which dispersed fastest – pines and birch. Eventually, the country was covered by a wildwood – a dense, deciduous forest of oak, ash, beech and lime. The colourful jay helped spread acorns.

One consequence of Britain’s separation into islands is that different species of animals now exist in neighbouring lands. Ireland only has 20 mammals, compared with 31 on the mainland.

Britain’s stunning 25,000km coastline is the greatest legacy of the end of the Ice Age. Not only was it a fertile breeding ground for seabirds, the coast was also popular with man’s earliest ancestors. On the tiny Hebridean island of Oronsay, Alan finds an ancient mound created by humans from millions of shells.

**Producer: Ian Gray**



Ancient mound of discarded shells, Oronsay

“The sea level rose, flooding those great land bridges that once linked us to mainland Europe”



Gannets on Bass Rock, Scotland