

Issued on behalf of the authors of “Odysseus Unbound - The Search for Homer’s Ithaca”

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“*Odysseus Unbound*” named one of top science stories of 2005 by “Discover” magazine

- **NASA software pinpoints landslips on Kefallinia believed to have infilled ‘Strabo’s Channel’**
- **Global Mapper technology confirms Homer's description of ancient Ithaca as 'low-lying'**
- **Project team now planning next stages of geological research**

The strong scientific evidence behind the proposed discovery of the location of ancient Ithaca, homeland of the Greek hero Odysseus - a mystery which has baffled scholars for 3,000 years - has contributed to ‘*Odysseus Unbound*’ being named one of 2005’s top science stories by the American science magazine “Discover”.

When new and compelling evidence was unveiled in September that Ithaca, as described in the poet Homer’s *Odyssey**, is in fact to be found on western Kefallinia, not the Greek island today called Ithaki, the announcement generated major international interest. Within 24 hours the news of this discovery had been relayed by over 100 newspapers, TV and radio stations world-wide. Since then the authors have delivered televised seminars about the discovery to audiences in London, Washington, Athens and Kefallinia itself.

In its top 100 stories, “Discover” magazine has now listed the discovery in its “History of Science” category as one of three important discoveries this year in which art, science and history are entwined. The others were the identification of Leonardo da Vinci’s workshop in Florence, and the finding of the sole remaining star chart by Greek astronomer Hipparchus. Further details are provided at <http://www.discover.com/issues/jan-06/cover/>

About the discovery

British businessman Robert Bittlestone (Chairman of management consultancy Metapraxis Ltd) tackled this long-standing enigma with the help of James Diggle, Professor of Greek and Latin at Cambridge University, and John Underhill, Professor of Geology at Edinburgh University, supported by around 40 other international experts. Bittlestone was convinced that since Homer’s description of Ithaca as “low-lying” and “furthest west” of a group of islands did not fit with the topography and location of modern Ithaki, which is mountainous and to the east, there must be another explanation. He did not believe the prevailing opinion of classical experts that Homer has simply got it wrong or that these descriptions were the product of his imagination.

In seeking to solve a series of clues provided in the *Odyssey* and by the geography and geology of the landscape, the international project team concluded that Ithaca is located on what is believed to have been the previously separated western peninsula of Kefallinia (Cephalonia), an area now

called Paliki. The crucial part of this evidence is the proposal that the isthmus of Thina that separates Paliki from the rest of Kefallinia was formerly a marine seaway (which the authors have called “Strabo’s Channel” after the geographer Strabo [64BC-AD21]), which has been infilled by catastrophic rockfalls triggered by earthquakes and land uplift.

NASA’s ‘World Wind’ software supports ‘flying around’ ancient Ithaca

New technologies have added to the weight of supporting evidence for the team’s conclusion. NASA’s free ‘World Wind’ Planetary Visualisation software can be downloaded to track the discovery. Users can now ‘fly around’ ancient Ithaca, seeing where landslips have occurred by the abrupt change in the steep gradient of the mountains. The collision of continental plates to the west of Paliki is also clearly visible. Instructions are provided at <http://www.odysseus-unbound.org/news.html> and the software will function on any modern Windows PC.

Global Mapper software confirms Homer’s Ithaca as ‘low-lying’

Digital elevation software from Global Mapper can now be used to calculate the average elevation above sea level of Paliki compared to modern-day Ithaki. The results demonstrate that contrary to Homer’s description, Ithaki itself is particularly rugged, with its highest summit 810m above sea level, cliff edges that drop straight down to the sea and an average elevation of 247m. By contrast, the average elevation of Paliki is only 146m above sea level and its eastern low-lying section is only 50m above sea level. Details of the latest calculations are also provided at <http://www.odysseus-unbound.org/news.html>

‘Odysseus Unbound’ book now in its second printing

The authors’ book about their research, entitled “*Odysseus Unbound – The Search for Homer’s Ithaca*”, was published by Cambridge University Press on October 6 and it has almost sold out its first print run of 10,000 copies. A second printing has been arranged to support world-wide demand. At <http://www.odysseus-unbound.org/reviews.html> reviews such as these are provided:

- “*Odysseus Unbound* has made the final link between real location and Homeric description”
- “Paliki-as-island is a sensational hypothesis”
- “Bittlestone's argument romps home”
- “The account of how he reached his conclusions is clear, engaging, funny, wonderfully illustrated”
- “Bittlestone has had the benefit of expert advice from James Diggle, probably the greatest living Hellenist, and John Underhill, professor at the University of Edinburgh (well known to football fans: he referees)”
- “I’ve just finished reading *Odysseus Unbound* and I have to say that the experience was utterly enthralling from start to finish”
- “A fascinating and compelling book”
- “I can feel that Odysseus was a real person, and that some sort of journey took place. It was just so amazing and I highly recommend it for anyone who loves Greece, Homer, or the *Odyssey*”
- “If Robert Bittlestone is correct, this will be one of the most important archaeological discoveries since Schliemann’s uncovering of Troy in the late 19th century”
- “Scholars will now have to think again about received wisdom on the *Odyssey*”
- “Shines a light on the past and its scholarly achievement must be acknowledged”.

Printed in full colour with 618 pages and 340 illustrations, the book is a gripping adventure story that has been written both for general readers with no prior knowledge of the *Odyssey* and also for experts in classics and geology.

Next stage of research planned for 2006

The team are now planning the next stages of their research. This is expected to include conducting a seismic survey and drilling boreholes in Thinia. A new charitable Foundation is being set up to form the basis for international fund-raising and sponsorship, and further contact from interested companies and individuals is welcomed. Contact details are provided at <http://www.odysseus-unbound.org/foundation.html>

*Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the oldest books in Western literature, and describe the Trojan War and the return of Odysseus (the hero of Troy who devised the trick of the wooden horse) from the battle to his palace on Ithaca, an island somewhere to the west of Greece. The stories had a massive influence on philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Socrates and they shaped the intellectual and cultural development of Greece throughout the classical era. This in turn has been the cornerstone of western culture, and for that reason Homer is regarded as both the earliest and the foremost architect of our western civilisation.

Despite Homer's immense influence, for three thousand years it was thought that the *Iliad* was a work of fiction and that Troy as Homer described it had never existed. Then in the 1870s Heinrich Schliemann conducted excavations in north-western Turkey which led to the discovery of the ancient city and, buried beneath it, the gold of Troy.

Notes to editors:

Further details about the book and the research are available at the following website:
<http://www.odysseus-unbound.org>

High resolution print quality images can be downloaded directly from this site at the Press page by logging in to the restricted area. Contact Amy Wilson for password details.

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