

Dr Emrys Phillips

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After being pushed into geology at school, Emrys still cannot believe his luck at being paid to study the world's most spectacular rock formations.

My introduction to geology occurred at school when at the tender age of thirteen I was told that my grades were not high enough to study biology and so I was being placed in a geology class. Well, as they say, the rest is history. I went straight from school to Manchester University to study geology and graduated in 1984 with a first class honors degree. I was then awarded the Prof. Sir William Boyd Dawkins Research Fund for my research MSc, with the snappy title of 'Selected studies of the mineralogy of granulite facies gneisses, Scourie Bay, Sutherland, NW Scotland'. Basically I was working on the geological foundations of Scotland, and some of the oldest rocks in the Europe.



In 1985 I started a NERC funded PhD at Cardiff University, studying the geology of Anglesey (Ynys Mon) in North Wales, graduating in 1989. Anglesey is one of the truly classic areas of British geology and, for its size, has some of the most varied and complex geology to be seen in the UK. Puzzling over the spectacularly folded sandstones revealed in the sea cliffs at South Stack and Rhoscolyn on Holy Island for three years was really good fun, honest!

In August 1990 I joined BGS as a member of the Mineralogy and Petrology Group. Over my 22 years at the Survey I have worked on a wide range of commercial and science projects throughout the UK, North America, Africa and the Middle East. So I have been able to visit some amazing places around the world all as part of my job at BGS.

In the past 10 years I have become increasingly interested in the study of glacial sediments and landforms, developing an expertise in the field of glacetectonics and the specialist technique known as micromorphology; the analysis of glacial sediments in thin section. This has proved to be an extremely interesting and scientifically highly productive area of research for me. As a result in 2011 I was awarded an Individual Merit Promotion (IMP, Band 3) and now I find myself in the fortunate position of spending more of my time carrying out my research on modern and ancient glacial environments. My IMP allows me to focus on my own research into subglacial and ice marginal processes and the factors controlling the forward motion of glaciers, and ultimately the stability of these ice masses. The IMP funding provided by BGS is enabling me to carry out field work in glaciated terrain in the UK, Iceland and, in the near future, Poland - visiting some of the most remote and spectacular parts of the world all as part of my job. In fact April 2013 will find me back in southeast Iceland with a team of scientists from BGS and Dundee University working on the twin glacier of Virkisjökull-Falljökull - NERC funded science just doesn't get better than this!

