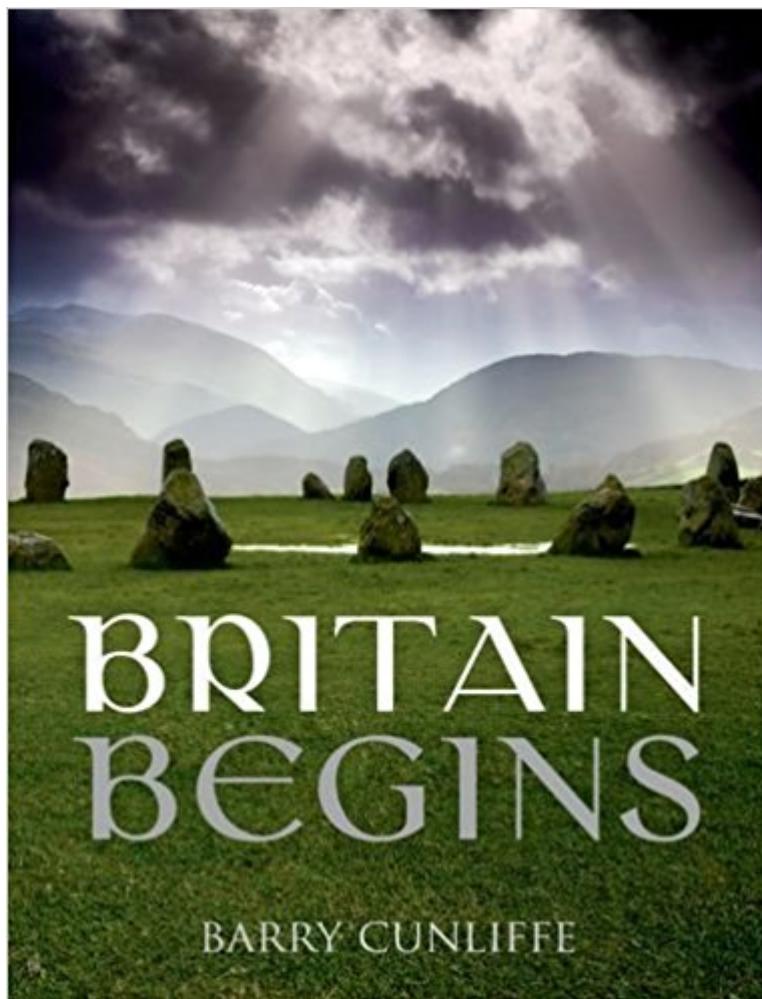


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Britain Begins



Synopsis

The last Ice Age, which came to an end about 12,000 years ago, swept the bands of hunter gatherers from the face of the land that was to become Britain and Ireland, but as the ice sheets retreated and the climate improved so human groups spread slowly northwards, re-colonizing the land that had been laid waste. From that time onwards Britain and Ireland have been continuously inhabited and the resident population has increased from a few hundreds to more than 60million. Britain Begins is nothing less than the story of the origins of the British and the Irish peoples, from around 10,000BC to the eve of the Norman Conquest. Using the most up to date archaeological evidence together with new work on DNA and other scientific techniques which help us to trace the origins and movements of these early settlers, Barry Cunliffe offers a rich narrative account of the first islanders - who they were, where they came from, and how they interacted one with another. Underlying this narrative throughout is the story of the sea, which allowed the islanders and their continental neighbours to be in constant contact. The story told by the archaeological evidence, in later periods augmented by historical texts, satisfies our need to know who we are and where we come from. But before the development of the discipline of archaeology, people used what scraps there were, gleaned from Biblical and classical texts, to create a largely mythological origin for the British. Britain Begins also explores the development of these early myths, which show our ancestors attempting to understand their origins. And, as Cunliffe shows, today's archaeologists are driven by the same desire to understand the past - the only real difference is that we have vastly more evidence to work with.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Another wonderful book from historian Barry Cunliffe, who can meld archaeology and history into a fascinating tale better than any other writer I know. This book traces the history of the British Isles from the earliest human habitation up to the Norman Conquest. Most of the book, therefore, is based on archaeological records rather than on written ones; it presents these so clearly that one can envision them, and shows how they suggest a pattern of history. There are a lot of unknowns, Cunliffe makes very clear, but there are also strong probabilities. Absolutely fascinating, and an engaging read as well

This is a carefully and broadly inclusive review of data related to the population of the British Isles as it developed over the centuries. The perspective of time and the evidence of which population derived from whatever source is dealt with in an even manner. The mysteries of an individual's specific heritage may or may not have an answer in DNA analysis. At least the reader will gain a perspective on the mix of ethnic groups which has occurred over the centuries. Sometimes the effort to include all possible evidence impedes the progress of the tale but a reader will gain an appreciation of the effort expended in presenting this excellent work.

This is an ok summary. It does not seem to include the recent DNA evidence.

I can't imagine a better overview of recent work. Makes clear the importance of very early travel & trade by boat with continental Europe. It includes many very high quality photos and maps. Note: Cunliffe attempts to include minimal information on what DNA studies indicate about population movement but this field is changing so fast that much of what is said is often obsolete before it hits the bookshelf.

Cunliffe is an excellent author and scientist. He has a great ability to pull together multiple

disciplines to tell and explain complex, and often controversial topics. This was an excellent study.

Cunliffe brings the past to life, and mingles Oppenheimer's genetic narrative into the fabric of the story. I love his books. (I have to set aside the obvious bias against religion, but I genuinely love the way he puts it together for the layman to understand.)

Dr. Cunliffe is one of the outstanding scholars of the United Kingdom and this book does not disappoint. It is an excellent overview of Britain from prehistory to the Vikings. It is very readable and an excellent reference to have in your library.

I now have three or four of Barry Cunliffe's books, for anyone interested in history, archaeology or understanding of your ancestors, BUY this book! His books are always well-written, with lots of maps and photographs. Joanne

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