

Ice Age Dorset

- During the last 1.5 million years, Britain has been subjected to a number of extreme fluctuations in temperature, which included **three** Ice Ages.
- During the last Ice Age around 18,000 years ago, Britain formed the north-western corner of an icy continent.
- Animals such as mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, bear and bison, were able to migrate across the frozen Doggerland, (which is the North Sea today) to Britain.
- Dorset was not affected by glaciation and no permanent areas of ice occurred, although snowfields were quite common over the higher parts of the Dorset Downs in winter.
- Dorset experienced very low temperatures, with permafrost on higher ground. Permafrost means the soil was at, or below, the freezing point of water (0 °C), for many years.
- Sudden changes in the sea-level, and successive warming and cooling, took their toll on the landscape.
- The two raised beaches on Portland Bill were created 210,000 and 125,000 years ago. Both are testament to the huge fluctuations in sea levels.
- During the summer months, partial melting of the ice created large rivers that washed enormous amounts of sand and gravel across the county.
- These rivers cut down into the landscape as they made their way to the lowered sea levels, causing large-scale landslips, most notably around Shaftesbury and Abbotsbury.
- Fossil remains of Ice Age animals, including the teeth and tusks of elephants and mammoths are often exposed in these gravels.
- At Bowleaze Cove, east of Weymouth, the Riviera Holiday Park is situated in a valley where the River Jordan, enters the sea. The valley mouth is a notable place for the remains of elephant, bison and other Ice Age mammals.



- [Chesil Bank](#) a 29 kilometres (18 mi) long [barrier beach](#) stretching from [West Bay](#) to Portland, was created 10,000 years ago, when sea levels rose at the end of the last Ice Age.