

Kevin Page

Formation of Meldon aplite.

This is a marvellous place because we can start to understand how Dartmoor actually formed, we have rocks here which have been pushed into place, maybe from tens of kilometres to the south, by the collision of Africa into Europe, pushing the rocks together, stacking them up and building a huge mountain range; this mountain range packed so high the bottom sank down and started to melt, and that formed a granite which rose to the surface. When the granite got here it started to cook the rocks and it formed what we call the metamorphic aureole, the rocks are literally cooked, and they're sometimes called a hornfels. Also the granite released fluids and caused fluids to circulate in these rocks and these fluids were full of minerals, they impregnated the rocks and they made all sorts of veins of unusual minerals; and a very special thing, unique really to here on Dartmoor, as the granite crystallised small amounts of liquid left over, water, were enriched with strange elements, boron, fluorine, beryllium, and finally these were squeezed out through a crack and crystallised to form the Meldon Aplite, a vein of pale granite-like rock, and this is really rich in rare minerals, some of them are probably only known from here in the UK. So this is very interesting scientifically, very, very important, so this is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and its protected for these rare minerals, so there are restrictions on collecting things here, but it is unique and really its one of the UK's geological gems.

And does this aplite have a specific use?

Well it was very low in iron so you could actually use it, some of the minerals in it, to produce glass, so there was an experimentation here in the 1920s of glass production, I mean there was great speculations, there was going to be 500 people here, big factories, but it only lasted about a year, but bottles were produced and you can still find fragments of them around the site and anyone who's got a Meldon glass bottle, it's something very precious indeed.