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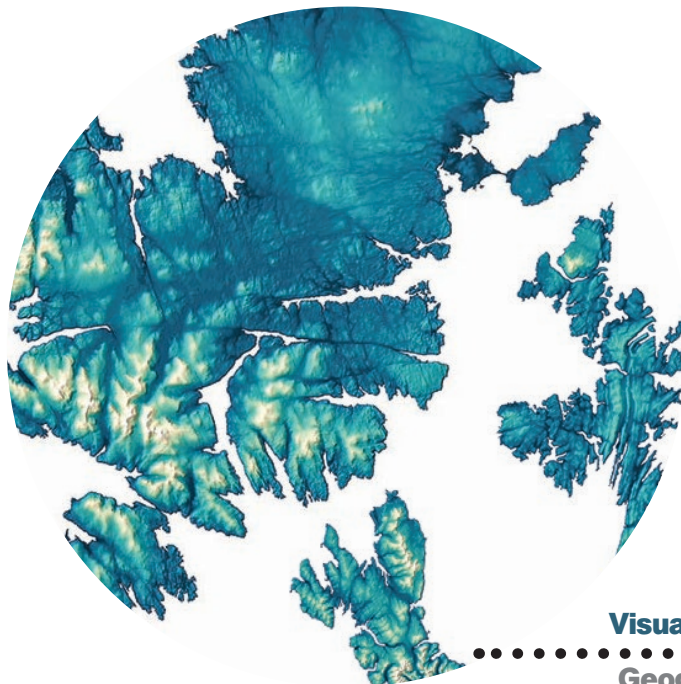
Autumn 2020

**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

Inside

- News
- Our work



Visualisations

Geographical
data stories

About the Society

Need to know

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is the UK's learned society for geography and professional body for geographers. We are also a membership organisation and a registered charity.

The Society was founded in 1830 to advance geographical science and this remains our core purpose. We achieve this through supporting geographical research, education, and fieldwork and expeditions, as well as by advocating on behalf of the discipline and promoting geography to public audiences.

We value our independence as well as the breadth of our activities that support the understanding of the world's people, places and environments. Everyone with an enthusiasm for geography, travel and exploration is welcome to join.

W www.rgs.org **T** @RGS_IBG **E** membership@rgs.org **T** 020 7591 3080



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A message From the Director

Today's world is very different from the one we lived in even five years ago, and the past few months have been particularly unsettling. Climate change, Brexit, racial inequality and a global pandemic are just a few of the prominent issues facing our world, and geography and geographers have a vital role to play in addressing them.

The Society's current five-year strategy was due for a refresh next year, but in June Council agreed that the seismic external changes we are facing warrant bringing that process forward.

Over the summer I have therefore been reviewing, along with trustees and other stakeholders, the Society's strategy. This has revealed exciting areas of opportunity – working more closely with partners to amplify our messages, for example. It has also pinpointed areas of potential threat,

including reductions in sources of external project funding.

The new strategy will be an evolution of the current one, with no radical change of direction. However, in addition to responding to external pressures brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the refreshed strategy will also seek to articulate more explicitly the Society's core values and aims. This includes working towards being more socially representative, diverse and inclusive, as well as becoming more environmentally sustainable and innovative.

Fellows and members can get in touch to raise questions or share ideas about the role and nature of our strategy at any time via

E director@rgs.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Professor Joe Smith
Director

Society News

COVID-19 and the Society

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Society's building is currently closed to everyone – including Fellows and members – and staff are working remotely. Given the current public health advice on both the use of public transport and the holding of events, we have decided that the building will not re-open in any substantive way until Monday 2 November at the earliest.

However, we are keeping a close eye on official advice and if circumstances change significantly, elements of the building may re-open sooner. We will let you know if/when this happens.

We understand this will be disappointing news, but the safety of our Fellows, members and staff comes first. Thank you for your ongoing understanding and support at this difficult time.



Medals and awards

This year our medals and awards recognised 22 different people or organisations for their outstanding contributions to geographical research, fieldwork, teaching and public engagement. The two Royal Medals were awarded to Professor Heather Viles and Michael Jones, read our interviews with them on page 18.

Full details of all the recipients are on our website.

[W www.rgs.org/medalsandawards2020](http://www.rgs.org/medalsandawards2020)

Council elections

Congratulations to our seven newest members of Council, who were elected at the Annual General Meeting in June: Robert Lucas (Vice President: Expeditions and Fieldwork), Niall McCann (Councillor: Expeditions and Fieldwork), Philip Avery (Councillor: Education), Professor Peter Kraftl (Honorary Secretary: Research and Higher Education), Professor Steve Darby (Councillor: Research and Higher Education), Carol Lawson (Honorary Treasurer) and David Lovell (Regions Representative).

We would like to thank our outgoing members of Council for their hard work and dedication to the Society during their terms of office.

Earth Photo shortlist revealed

The shortlist for the 2020 Earth Photo competition has been announced.

The 50 images and four films, which explore the themes of people, place, nature, changing forests, and climate change, are available to view on our website.

The 2020 Earth Photo exhibition will take place in our Pavilion at the Society between December and February. A touring exhibition will be on show at various Forestry England sites later this year and into 2021.

[W www.rgs.org/earthphoto](http://www.rgs.org/earthphoto)

Agreement with the AGI

We are delighted to have signed an agreement continuing our strategic alliance with the Association for Geographic Information (AGI). This aims to further strengthen a range of activities for the benefit of both geography professionals and businesses over the next two years, including joint activities and providing support, recognition and accreditation for those working in the sector.

Education News

School essay competition

We are pleased to launch our second joint School Essay Competition with the *Financial Times*. We are seeking thoughtful and well-argued responses from sixth form students on the geographical story behind a chosen set of data about sustainability and climate change. Answers should use data that helps tell a story based around the COP-26 aims 'to increase climate ambition, build resilience and lower emissions'. The deadline is 30 September.

W www.rgs.org/schoolessaycompetition

Excellence Awards

Congratulations to the recipients of our 2019 Excellence Awards for their achievements in the summer 2019 geography exams. The Awards recognise the pupils who achieve the highest marks nationally and reflect their hard work and the support of their geography teachers.

W www.rgs.org/excellenceawards2019

Scholars starting a new term

We are excited to be supporting a new cohort of 140 Scholars who are beginning their teacher training in September. We will be providing them with additional resources, networking opportunities, and £17,000 tax free funding. We wish them all the best in starting the new school year.

W www.rgs.org/scholarships

Congratulations

Congratulations to everyone who received their GCSE and A Level results over the summer, especially given the unusual circumstances. Whether you are going on to further study or entering the world of work, we wish you all the best. If you are still deciding on whether to study geography for your A Levels or at university you can find out about the benefits of studying the discipline on our website.

W www.rgs.org/choosegeography



S. A. Agulhas II © Weddell Sea Expedition

Resources

Over the past few months we have been developing new resources to support the teaching and learning of geography, including worksheets to use at home. We have been producing timely resources for teachers to share with parents and students, including podcasts, case studies, articles and news roundups.

With support from the Flotilla Foundation, we have also been developing a range of

new resources to complement the Weddell Sea Expedition, including a virtual collector's album and other interactive resources. We will share images of Antarctica on social media, with a code to unlock information on a computer or tablet about who lives on the frozen continent, its tourism, biodiversity and how nations work together to protect this unique polar region. These new resources will be launched in the autumn.

W www.rgs.org/wse

From the field News



Fieldwork in Greenland © Melissa Murphy

COVID-19 and our grants programme

The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the fieldwork plans of many researchers, however the Society is continuing to select projects and commit funding for researchers who plan to go into the field when it is safe and responsible to do so. These grants will only be formally awarded, and funds will only be released to the recipient, when Government, FCO and in-country guidance is clear that it is appropriate to do so. We continue to uphold

the highest health and safety and ethics protocols for the research projects we (or any of the organisations we work with) support through the grants programme.

To date, with the generous support of our donors, close to £190,000 of funding has been allocated this year to support 39 field research projects. Projects are planned to take place in 28 countries spanning five continents, and covering a range of topics, including constraining river erosion rates and long-term evolution of volcanic island landscapes in the Azores and Madeira archipelagos, investigating the place-based geography of climate perception and its impacts on migration in Cambodia, and an interdisciplinary study of grazing pressure in the Dhofar Mountains of Oman.

Application deadlines for the 2021 grants programme begin in November 2020.

W www.rgs.org/grants

Research and higher education News

Annual International Conference

We are pleased to announce that our Annual International Conference 2022 will be held at Newcastle University. Dr Sarah Evans, Research and Collections Engagement Manager at the Society, said: “We are really delighted to be bringing the annual conference to Newcastle in 2022. We know both the university and the city will be welcoming hosts, and we are keen for our delegates to see all that Newcastle has to offer.”

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have postponed our 2020 Annual International Conference, which will now be held at the Society between Tuesday 31 August and Friday 3 September 2021. The conference will have the same theme *Borders, borderlands and bordering* and will be chaired by Professor Uma Kothari.

W www.rgs.org/annualconference

Home SOS

The latest addition to the RGS-IBG book series, *Home SOS: Gender, Violence, and Survival in Crisis Ordinary Cambodia*, shines a spotlight on domestic violence and eviction in Cambodia.

Written by Professor Katherine Brickell of Royal Holloway, University of London, the book draws on over 15 years of fieldwork and over 300 interviews to highlight the experiences of intimate violence and survival as told by Cambodian women.

Home SOS is available to order now from the Wiley website, and Fellows and members receive up to a 35% discount when using the discount code listed in the Members' Area of the website.

W www.rgs.org/login



WIRES turns 10

WIRES Climate Change, a Wiley journal published in association with the Royal Meteorological Society and the Society, is celebrating 10 years of publishing. Edited by Professor Mike Hulme of the University of Cambridge, *WIRES* offers a unique platform for exploring current and emerging knowledge from diverse research perspectives across a range of disciplines that develop our understanding of climate change.

Fellows and members of the Society can access *WIRES* articles for free as part of their membership by logging in to our website.

W www.rgs.org/login

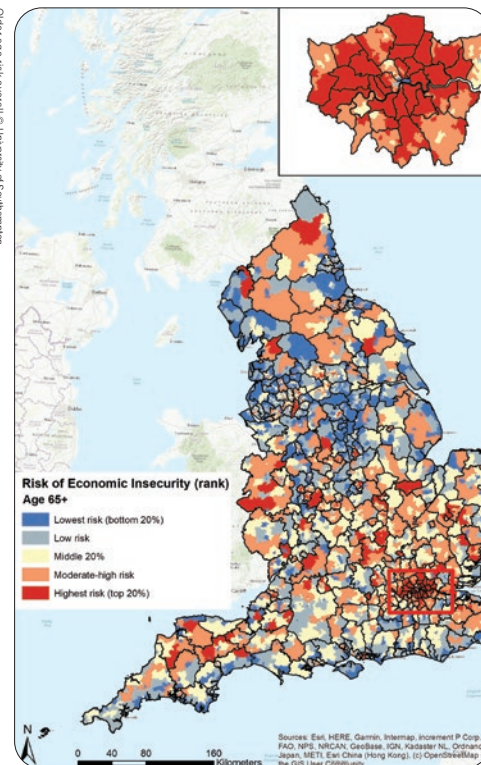
Master's accreditation

We are expanding our university programme accreditation scheme this autumn to include UK geography Master's programmes. The Society already awards accreditation to high-quality undergraduate and integrated Master's programmes, with geography degrees at over 50 UK universities now accredited. The expansion of the scheme to include stand-alone Master's programmes will offer students and employers confidence that postgraduate geography programmes develop workplace-ready graduates, with a depth of knowledge and expertise in a particular specialist area of geography.

The first application deadline for Master's accreditation is Wednesday 30 September.

W www.rgs.org/accreditation

Order age risk overall © University of Southampton



Geography Directions

Geography Directions, the Society's blog linked to our scholarly journals, showcases the importance of geography and geographical insights to pressing issues facing society and the environment. Recently, content has focused on the COVID-19 outbreak and the world after the pandemic. Posts have considered wastewater detection of outbreaks, public transport and urban mobility, decarbonisation and the new energy order, the divided UK, Black deaths and immobilities, quarantine urban ecologies, and environmental activism in lockdown.

W blog.geographydirections.com

Professional News

Government Geography Profession

The Government Geography Profession has become a standalone profession within the Government Analysis Function and is now based at the Cabinet Office alongside the Geospatial Commission. Initially established two and a half years ago, the Geographers in Government group now has over 1,200 members across the public sector. It supports members through events and professional training, and celebrates the profession through awards.

Head of the Government Geography Profession, David Wood said: “I would like to thank all those who have joined the profession and worked with us to help us realise our vision. But there’s a lot more we want to do as a profession to support our members, set standards, and work to embed geography at the heart of government decision making.”

Geospatial professional development

The Geospatial Commission’s Geospatial Strategy 2020-2025, which was published in June, identifies enhancing capabilities, skills and awareness as one of its four missions. The Society is therefore continuing its work with employers and universities to strengthen links in the geospatial sector, highlighting the skills geography graduates bring to working with spatial data, and encouraging more opportunities for work-based learning, such as research projects and internships.

We are also facilitating a trailblazer group of employers, learning providers and others to develop and propose an apprenticeship that develops the specialist skills that are in demand across a wide range of sectors.

Discussion between colleagues © Ellie Morris



Geography Professional launched

We have launched a new programme of support for professionals who are committed to making an application for Chartered Geographer (CGeog) accreditation. *Geography Professional* is open to anyone interested in gaining CGeog accreditation but is especially appropriate for early-career professionals looking for structured advice, support and mentoring as they work towards professional recognition.

The programme unlocks a range of benefits and support including a recognised status and membership of a peer group; a review of your Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities with advice on how to shape future CPD to support your CGeog application; access to our mentoring network; and personalised support throughout the application process.

W www.rgs.org/geographyprofessional

Events Highlights

Autumn events programme

This autumn all of the Society's public events will be held online. Our events include an evening marking the 200th anniversary of the first sighting of Antarctica and the unique research conducted there today, a topical discussion on the risks to the UK of a world that's three degrees warmer, and the annual EGR Taylor lecture investigates the technical challenges early modern European navigators faced on their vessels.

Our annual children's lecture has been refreshed and will take place entirely online with a host of experts sharing their stories to enthuse and inform our young audience (and their accompanying grown-ups) about the precious and extraordinary planet we call home.

We are continuing to live stream Monday night lectures via our website while

Lowther Lodge is closed. Our speakers this term include Professor Andy Tatem, Monisha Rajesh, Tim Jarvis, Hilary Bradt and Sir Michael Palin.

We are monitoring the public health advice on large gatherings, events and use of public transport closely, and will resume physical Monday night lectures when it is safe and feasible to do so.

Fellows and members can access the live stream of our Monday night lectures by logging in to the Members' Area and accessing our live streaming page. If you haven't previously logged in, you can set a password using the 'forgotten password' link on the login page.

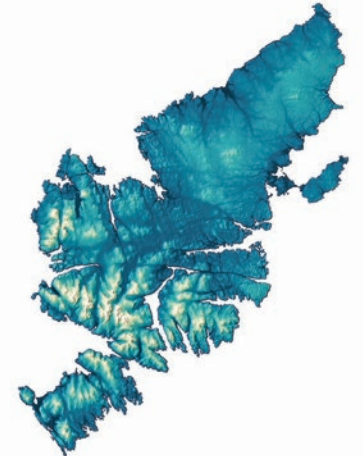
You can find details of all of our events online at [W www.rgs.org/events](http://www.rgs.org/events)

Geovisualisations Insights with data

Geography has never been more important in helping us to understand our rapidly changing world, and geographers bring a critical perspective and approach to the interpretation and presentation of data. We have launched a new series of images looking at the power of maps and geographical data visualisations for telling stories about our world, from mapping the current global COVID-19 pandemic and air pollution levels in Europe, to showcasing shifting voting patterns in the 2019 general election and predicting gentrification patterns in London.

The series showcases how the skills and techniques used to connect data on societies, economies and environments, underpins good decision-making and improves understanding of our world.

GB Islands: Laws and Hains © Paul Naylor and OS



Great Britain's largest islands

Paul Naylor, Cartographic Design Consultant at Ordnance Survey (OS), and the team at OS created a visualisation showcasing Britain's largest islands. Inspired by David Garcia's data visualisation of the Philippines, the team used a range of OS data to create rich, detailed terrain maps of 82 English, Scottish and Welsh islands.

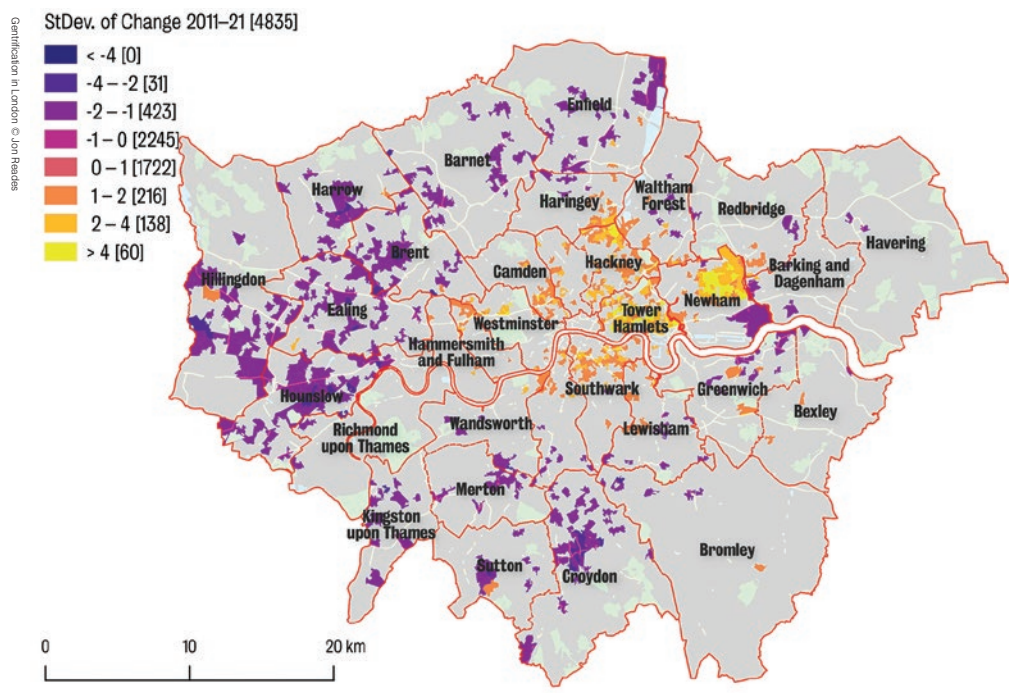


As Paul said: “OS has a range of rich and detailed geographic datasets which we were able to make use of and give us some amazing end visuals. It has become a really popular image that has inspired a lot of people across social media to try and visit every island. Hopefully some people have achieved some, or all, of this goal, but because of the current situation with regards to COVID-19 I’m hoping that it might provide people with something nice to look at whilst they are staying at home and keeping safe.”

Gentrification in London

Dr Jonathan Reades, Senior Lecturer in Quantitative Human Geography at King's College London, created a visualisation which applies data science and machine learning methods to gentrification. Using data from the 2001 and 2011 censuses, Jonathan used open source software and a machine learning model to predict demographic change throughout London by 2021.

Jonathan said: “Most of the work that has been done in the UK on gentrification has taken a qualitative approach. But if we want to look at prediction and think about which areas are going to be impacted next, then we need to turn to a different set of methods. That’s where machine learning comes in. What I really like about this approach is that it allows us to get an idea of the size of the problem, at the scale of an entire region.”





Mapping COVID-19

The coronavirus pandemic is fundamentally geographical, with the global crisis affecting us all. It is presenting huge challenges for health care providers who need to work out how the virus is spreading and where best to target their resources. Maploom, a mapping, analytics and visualisation company, created an open-access online interactive visualisation which displays the evolution of the pandemic and allows users to compare and contrast data from different countries through interactive maps, dashboards and automatically generated reports.

Andy Murdock CGeog (GIS), Managing Director of Maploom, said: "The COVID-19 pandemic is a fast moving, dynamic situation and so standalone maps are only of use for a limited time. When we created the detailed specific country reports, there was not really anything else like it available



in the public domain. The interactive maps and dashboards offer a more flexible approach and enable the latest situation to be presented. The fact that the data also form an ongoing record of the virus and its evolution means that we are able to explore other visualisations through interactive charts and recent trends."

To see the current range of our geovisualisations, visit our website.

[W www.rgs.org/geovisualisation](http://www.rgs.org/geovisualisation)

Medals and awards

2020 Royal Medal recipients

This year our medals and awards recognised 22 different people and organisations for their extraordinary achievements in geographical research, fieldwork, teaching, and public engagement. We caught up with this year's Royal Medallists, Professor Heather Viles and Michael Jones to find out more about their achievements, maps and the future of geography.



© Mimi Sael

Professor Heather Viles

Founder's Medal

What are you most proud of in your career so far? That's a difficult question, but I'm certainly very proud of the wonderful team of researchers and students that I've developed working around me. I'm also very proud of the fact that my research has contributed, even in a small way, to solving some important problems for heritage conservation.

During your career, how has biogeomorphology, and geography more widely, changed? One of the biggest changes has been the explosion of technology which now supports the research that we do. I couldn't do any of my field research without the many gadgets that have been developed. Also I think geography, and biogeomorphology, have been proven to be really useful subjects, which address some of the very biggest challenges the world faces today.

Where do you think the discipline is going in the future? I'd like to suggest that geography is like a chameleon, that it changes its appearance to fit in with its surroundings, whilst keeping at its heart what it really believes in and is good at. I think geography will continue to be the subject to go to for anybody who's interested in how humans interact with their environment.



Michael Jones

Patron's Medal

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement and what are you most proud of in your work? Hopefully my greatest achievement will be the next one. This is a core aspiration of life.

The work cited by the Society in awarding me the Patron's Medal has touched the most people and I am proud of that. It changed how we understand our world by answering questions as a personal conversation with the planet. Google Earth

answers with imagery, in 3D, on a globe that is science fiction's ultimate map room. I am proud of the dream, the invention that makes it possible, and everyone and everything involved.

During your career how has cartography and mapping changed? Maps have become personal and conversational: your map is created from answers to your questions, a personal assistant customised by our tastes and habits. It is quite a change from mapping data evolving at a geological or glacial pace to today's minute-by-minute health, safety, and traffic news. Today we're all part of map making. Our travels help characterise roads as congested and slow, our presence votes for locations as popular, and because of the web, anyone can curate a map visible to people worldwide. So it's not just a billion people using a map, it is a billion people making a map through their daily lives.

How do you think mapping, maps and our use of them will change in the future? Like everything, mapping will become better at what it already does: precise capture of location data using imagery, more perfect geospatial computation, and better imagery in terms of resolution and update frequency and advanced sensors including synthetic aperture radar (SAR) and hyperspectral sensors.

Maps for people to look at will be less frequent than maps as a means of data processing. Many mobile phone applications rely on location information. This is 'maps for computers'. Self-driving cars and trucks need 'maps for robots'. Augmented Reality needs 'maps for artificial intelligence'. This is all mapping. It is the same science but not intended for human eyes or interpretation.

Exhibitions

Visit them online

The Society's extensive Collections comprise over two million artefacts, archival items, books, maps, films and photographs. Together they form a valuable source of primary archival materials that allow us to ask questions about representation and start to tell the stories that haven't yet been told around themes of gender, race, ethnicity, indigeneity and class. As part of our work to make diverse geographical histories more accessible, we're starting to put some of our Collections-based exhibitions online so you can discover the stories for yourself.

W www.rgs.org/online-exhibitions

Native of Stanley's party, Cape Town © RGS-BIG



Hidden Histories

Exploration has always been a fundamentally collective and shared experience. Sometimes hidden, sometimes visible, the role of local people in the history of exploration and travel deserves to be much better known.

In many different parts of the world, from the Arctic to Asia, and from Africa to the Americas, European explorers relied on local knowledge and support from intermediaries such as interpreters and guides, which is often overlooked.



Chiefs de la Nouvelle-Zélande © RGS-BIG

This online exhibition recognises and celebrates the collaboration and co-production of a selection of expeditions. Drawing on the AHRC-funded project *Hidden Histories of Exploration* by Professor Felix Driver and Dr Lowri Jones, which featured in a major exhibition at the Society in 2009, Hidden Histories contains numerous images of exploration since 1800 and explores the work, the documentation and the ethics of these expeditions.



Mount Everest in morning light © RGS-BIG

Everest – A Reconnaissance

The 1921 British Mount Everest Reconnaissance Expedition mapped approach routes to the mountain and climbed to 23,000 feet, laying plans for future attempts and providing some of the first, and finest, close-range images of Everest.

Photography was always an important component of Mount Everest expeditions. From the first expedition onward, cameras and the paraphernalia required were



Two Sherpa photographic porters © RGS-BIG

part of the equipment factored into the logistics of climbing the mountain. For the porters it was certainly a heavy load, from cameras and lenses to glass plate negatives, tripods and chemicals. The early expeditions took all that was needed both to expose and to develop pictures on the mountain.

The 1921 photographs were taken by a disparate group of men, from scientists to climbers, doctors of medicine to surveyors and there are fascinating differences in how



Porters climbing along a ridge © RGS-BIG

each saw and recorded their time on the mountain. The photographs also depict the overlooked but indispensable role that the Sherpas played during the expeditions, and are an important source of historical documentation for the Tibetan and Nepali peoples, as well as being a valuable tool for wider research.

This exhibition showcases a selection of platinum prints, available to purchase, made from the newly digitised glass and celluloid negatives of the 1921 Everest expedition.

Membership

Thank you for your support

Over the last few months, Society staff have worked hard to adapt our services, events and resources so that you can continue to enjoy the benefits of membership.

It may still be a few months until we're able to offer face to face events again, but our online training and events programme, including Monday night lectures, is in full swing. And with physical conferences, meetings and networking all postponed, we have been finding other ways to support Fellows and members, for example by providing online advice and resources as well as spaces for digital meetings.

Without your support for the Society, our wide-ranging charitable work to support geographers and advance geography would not be possible. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have continued our work recruiting Teacher Training Scholars



and supporting geography teachers, providing grants for field research, and contributing to policy consultations.

Thank you for your ongoing support during what is a difficult time for everyone.

Nominate a Fellow

Fellowship

If you know someone who would benefit from being part of a vibrant community of geographers, why not nominate them for Fellowship of the Society?

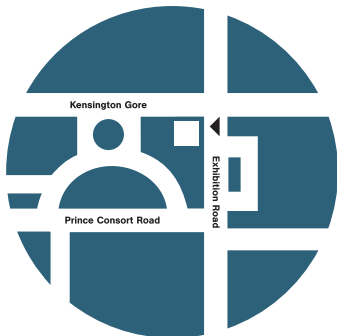
Fellowship is open to anyone over the age of 21 who can bring geographical or allied subject expertise to the Society – this could be from an academic, educational or professional background.

Our Fellows bring a wide range of experiences to the organisation and are vital to the Society's mission to advance geography. They enable us to achieve so much more as a result of their expertise, knowledge and enthusiasm for the discipline.

So nominate a friend for Fellowship today – encourage their passion for geography and support our work.

W www.rgs.org/fellowship

How to find us



Entrance is on Exhibition Road
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The Society is the learned society and professional body for geography. We support and promote geographical research, education, fieldwork and expeditions, and geography in society; we also advise on policy issues. The Society has substantial Collections available to all.

Corporate Partners

