

Bulletin Spring 2023

**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

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- Our work



Travelling
with purpose

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.

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© Hannah Marshall

A message From the Director

I would like to thank all of you who engaged in the process of approving the changes to the Society's Bye Laws proposed by Council. At the Special General Meeting on Monday 3 October, 97% of votes cast by the Fellowship were in favour of the changes to the size and make-up of Council, and to petition the Privy Council for a Supplemental Charter which includes those changes.

Current members of Council will complete the terms of office they were elected for, but from next year's Council elections, we will start to see the changes coming into effect and Council will be brought into line with the Charity Commission's Charity Governance Code over the coming couple of election cycles.

You can read the amended Bye Laws and draft Supplemental Charter on our website.

W www.rgs.org/ByeLaws

And if you're interested in standing for election to Council in 2023, or in future years, all the information on how to do so is on our website.

W www.rgs.org/Council

You've hopefully seen our current campaign asking existing members to encourage a friend, colleague, or family member to join the Society. When you refer a friend, and they join before 16 December, you will both receive 15 months of membership for the cost of 12. All you need to do is give them your membership number and ask them to fill in the form on our website.

W www.rgs.org/ReferAFriend

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Professor Joe Smith
Director

Society News

Esmond B. Martin Prize

As the result of an endowment by the late conservationist Esmond Bradley Martin, the Society is launching an annual prize 'to recognise outstanding international achievement by individuals in the pursuit and /or application of geographical research... with a particular emphasis on wildlife conservation and environmental related studies'. A lecture on Monday 3 April will launch the prize and honour Esmond's achievements.

W www.rgs.org/EsmondBMartinPrize

Special General Meeting result

At an SGM in October, the Society's Fellowship voted to amend the Bye Laws as proposed by the Society's Council. These changes relate to the size and make-up of Council, our board of elected Trustees, in line with Charity Commission's Charity Governance Code.

W www.rgs.org/bye-law-changes



Regional event © Forestry England

Join a regional committee

We have nine regional committees across England, Northern Ireland and Wales, which are managed by groups of local volunteers. They offer the opportunity to advance idea-sharing and support the Society by organising events and activities for members and the public in your area.

Joining a regional committee can give you the opportunity to interact with other people who are passionate about geography, to develop your career, and to do more for geography in your community. All of the regional committees welcome new members and the new ideas they bring.

W www.rgs.org/regions

Thank you for completing our survey

Thank you to the more than 800 members who completed our survey this autumn. Your vital feedback helps guide our future decisions, leading to a better experience for you and all who engage with us. If you have any comments or feedback about your membership please get in touch.

E membernews@rgs.org

Collections bequest

The Society has received a generous Collections bequest from author and founder of the Wild Camel Protection Foundation, John Hare OBE FRGS (1934 - 2022). The bequest comprises archive material, photographs and film from John's travels in Central Asia and Northern Nigeria. The material is currently being accessioned and will be available via the online catalogue and Foyle Reading Room.

W www.rgs.org/collections

Education News



Ambassadors © RGS-IBS

Ambassadors can provide interactive classroom activities, present informative assemblies, support options evenings and more. Sessions could focus on anything from 'Why I love geography' to geography-related careers or have a specific focus on curriculum topics such as climate change. Our Ambassadors are positive role models for students, drawing on their own reflections and experiences, while illustrating the transferable skills and interests they have developed as geographers. The scheme is funded by Esri UK, one of the Society's Corporate Partners, and we work with a variety of university departments across the UK to source Ambassadors. Find out more and book your visit now.

W www.rgs.org/ambassadors

Geography Ambassadors

The Society is inviting all secondary schools to participate in our Geography Ambassador scheme, which aims to promote geography to students as a valuable and exciting option at GCSE, A Level and beyond. The scheme sends undergraduate and professional Geography Ambassadors into the classroom, at no cost, to enthuse students and to talk to them about the benefits of studying geography.

Support for school fieldwork

We have recently redesigned and improved our school fieldwork webpages. Sections now include skills progression in fieldwork, presenting your fieldwork ideas to senior leaders, a fieldwork planning toolkit, an introduction to key fieldwork experiences and techniques, legal requirements and laws, risk management, dealing with incidents, safety around water, and using fieldwork providers. We also link from these pages to our wealth of fieldwork resources and materials, as well as to our range of fieldwork CPD sessions for teachers.

W www.rgs.org/schoolfieldwork

Geography for all update

The *Geography for all* project launched in May 2022 and more than 200 teachers have already joined this national equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) network. Free online and in-person events have been organised to support network members in making their teaching more inclusive. A group of Geography Mentors have been recruited and trained, and are visiting schools to work with students from diverse backgrounds to support and encourage their aspirations through geography.

W www.rgs.org/geographyforall

From the field News

Supporting students gaining experience in the field

After a two-year pause, we are delighted to be able to once again support students getting their first experience of field research.

The Fieldwork Apprenticeships scheme enables undergraduate students, who would not otherwise have the opportunity, to participate in an overseas fieldwork project led by an academic member of staff at their university. Eleanor Hall (University of Hertfordshire) joined a field research project led by Dr Oliver Bartlett investigating permafrost thaw and landslides in Adventdalen, Svalbard, while Alice Jardine and Christopher Edmunds (University of Oxford) joined the DRY-CAB project in Zambia, taking meteorological measurements and using weather balloons to study atmosphere dynamics through rainfall cycles.

The Geographical Fieldwork Grants supported undergraduate and master's students this summer working on topics from biogeography to glaciology. Cassie Dummett and Joe Langley, MSc students at University College London, investigated the social, ecological and botanical aspects of the central Congo peatlands. They successfully conducted studies of the community's use of peatland forests, and of the diversity and community composition of peatlands.

W www.rgs.org/in-the-field

Apply now for our upcoming grants

Every year we support over 60 student fieldwork projects with our range of grants, many of which have application deadlines coming up in the new year. Early career and established researchers can obtain funding up to £6,000.

W www.rgs.org/grants

Research and higher education News

Annual International Conference 2023

Next year's conference will be held from Tuesday 29 to Friday 31 August 2023 at the Society, and it will be chaired by Harriet Bulkeley from Durham University. The theme will be *Climate changed geographies*. Key dates and timelines will be announced on our website.

W www.rgs.org/ac2023

Doing geography series

The Society has recently published a report which considers the ethical and methodological challenges of carrying out research with refugee and asylum-seeker youth in European cities.

Written by a team of researchers based across Europe, the report discusses research encounters that worked well, and those where challenges arose, from their work in Brussels, Amsterdam, Leipzig and Newcastle.

This report is the first in the new *Doing geography* series, sharing and promoting the contributions of geography and geographers. We welcome suggestions for additions to the series.

W www.rgs.org/refugee-youth

Grant reviewer resources

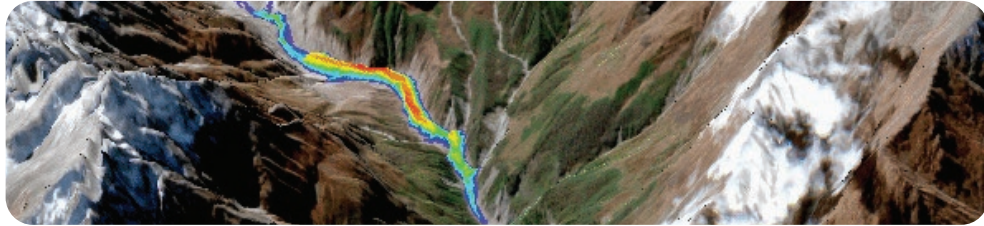
We have brought together a new series of resources on reviewing grants, with topics including good practice for reviewing, conflicts of interest, unconscious bias and the benefits for those who give their time and expertise to review.

Our grants programme relies on over 30 academic reviewers each year, reviewing more than 180 grant applications.

We are also seeking new researchers and academics at all career stages to join our reviewers, broadening and diversifying the range of perspectives that provide input.

W www.rgs.org/grant-reviewing

Professional News



New geovisualisations

Geovisualisation provides the opportunity to explore issues, present data and communicate in a unique and creative way. A recent geovisualisation in our series demonstrates how Dr Anshuman Bhardwaj and Dr Lydia Sam at the University of Aberdeen used earth observation data to model, and understand, avalanches in the Himalayas. The visualisation has raised community awareness and interest in mountain hazards, and is hoped to be a small but key step in developing hazard warning systems and policy interventions.

W www.rgs.org/avalanche-geovis

CPD accreditation

Continuing Professional Development is an integral part of applying for, and maintaining, Chartered Geographer accreditation. The Society now offers a mark to recognise activities and events which support geographers in their professional development. This gives recognition to high quality and relevant training for geographers and raises the profile of those offering them.

W www.rgs.org/CPDmark

Chartered Geographers reach 1,000

We are celebrating the accreditation of the 1,000th Chartered Geographer, a landmark for the scheme which is the Society's internationally recognised accreditation for professional geographers.

Chartered Geographers are found wherever geographers are working in professional practice and they demonstrate the range of roles and expertise of professionals across many sectors. We are pleased that the recent cohort of successful applications continues this diversity, with teaching, journalism, geomorphology, public sector and GIS consultancy represented.

We look to recognise geographical knowledge, skills and behaviours wherever geography is being used, whether that is in green finance, sustainable tourism or green energy, or many other sectors.

W www.rgs.org/cgeog



Associate Fellowship for early career geographers

Associate Fellow (Early Career) offers geographers who are within five years of graduating from an undergraduate degree affordable access to networks, professional development opportunities, webinars and more. Join our December online networking event for Associate Fellows as a guest or catch up on the year's *Professional insights* series including the recent event on geovisualisation which covered what makes a good geovisualisation and how to get started.

W www.rgs.org/associate-fellowship

Events Highlights



© Nando Machado

Discover new perspectives with our Monday night lecture series. In March we will take you on a journey to learn what it takes to capture the beauty and diversity of the UK's landscapes and wildlife with the producers behind David Attenborough's Wild Isles. We will also delve into global issues, such as sustainable travel and energy security.

We will be introducing a new 'lates' event, Icestation RGS, this March with an exciting interactive evening of music, talks, activities and performances connecting all things ice related.

If you want to receive regular email updates about events in your area or online, then update your communications preferences in the Members' Area of our website.

W www.rgs.org/email-preferences

Spring events programme

This spring we will be bringing you another packed schedule of lectures, CPD, networking opportunities, regional events, exhibitions, and so much more. Book your tickets now to guarantee your place and ensure you will receive the most up to date booking information.

Our events, both online and in-person, will help you explore your interests and allow you to develop your knowledge and networks.

On the roof of the world

Bon in Dolpo

The Neville Shulman Challenge Award was established in 2001 for the Society by Neville Shulman CBE. Each year an award of £5,000 is given to a research project or expedition which is challenging – intellectually, physically, and in terms of the issue being studied.

We invited this year's awardees, Eileen McDougall, a writer from the UK, and Rejina Tamang, a geology Master's student from Nepal, to share their journey and what they learned.

“Bordering Tibet, Dolpo is a high-altitude region of Western Nepal, which has long been a religious centre and refuge for the more eclectic and marginalised elements of Tibetan religion. Today, it is home to 13,000 followers of Bon, a religion believed to have been practiced across the Tibetan plateau prior to the arrival of Tibetan Buddhism in the 7th century.

Yakaram, Nagdale © Eileen McDougall





Shimen pilgrims © Eileen McDougall

“This year the Neville Shulman Award supported us to journey, mainly on foot, through the highly inaccessible Bon settlements and places of worship of Dolpo. Our journey was motivated by a desire to learn about this mysterious and little-known religion, and to understand what challenges these remote communities are facing today, particularly those caused by the changing climate.

“Visiting the valleys of Upper Dolpo requires a minimum commitment of a month. The scarcity of hotels and services means a high degree of self-sufficiency is also required. The Award funded our travel and allowed us to transport our equipment and supplies independently and safely through the region. We also hired a local guide, which was crucial as the language, which is similar to Tibetan, is not understood by speakers of most other languages in Nepal.



Khomo village © Eileen McDougall

“On the edge of the inhabitable world, climate change is undoubtedly affecting the lives of the Bonpos. Locals consistently talked of increasingly erratic monsoon rains and winter snow in recent decades. This has caused water shortages, flash hailstorms and flooding, destroying irrigation canals, degrading animal pasturelands, and causing significant problems in agriculture.

“One of the main sources of income in the area is from the collection of yartsa gunbu, a unique biological interaction between mushroom spores and moth larvae. The fungi are highly valued in Chinese medicine and according to locals, has significantly increased living standards in the region in the last few decades. However, yartsa yields have been steadily decreasing, which locals say is due to over-picking and weather changes.

“Recently, the Dolpo-Tibet border has been closed due to COVID-19, having a huge effect on Dolpo communities. Before the pandemic most goods came from China. Now goods must be transported long distances by mule and yak caravans from the rest of Nepal at high cost.

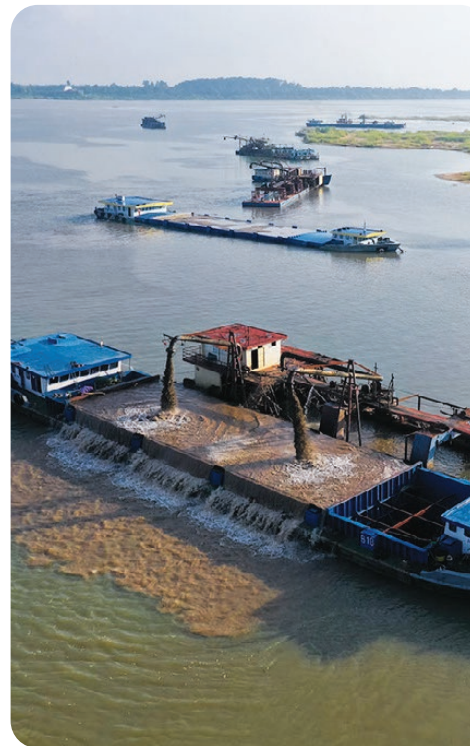
“We found vibrant and vehemently religious Bon communities throughout Dolpo. Many communities of Bonpos (followers of Bon) rely entirely on their natural surroundings to survive. Their physical and spiritual relationships with their surroundings are strong – they worship mountains, rivers, stones as deities and protectors in the absence of most state safety nets and services, most many turn to local lamas, both Bonpo and Buddhist, when they face challenges in their lives.”

W www.rgs.org/nevilleshulman

Sharing research with new audiences

Lost lands

Sand extraction, Pokhara, Kosiang Commune © Andy Ball, University of Southampton



The Society regularly partners with geographers who are leading funded research projects to advance geographical science and further our understanding of the world, its people, places and environments.

Our role includes working with the project teams to disseminate the research findings to geography students through educational resources, to professionals through our Environment-Society event series, and the wider public through our public events programme, website and social media.

In the last year we have worked with the Stay Home Stories project to develop award winning educational resources; created podcasts on tropical peatlands and the circular economy; and recently collaborated with a NERC-funded team from the University of Southampton to

host an online exhibition, *Lost lands – hidden stories of sand mining on the Mekong River*.

For over a decade, an international team of geographers from the UK, Vietnam and Cambodia have undertaken a study of the Mekong River and observed how the Tonle Sap lake systems function as well as the relationships that local people have with these water resources.

The team collaborated with a Cambodia-based photographer to document the nature and scale of sand mining (the removal of sand from the bed of the river by mechanical extraction) activity in the region. A huge global increase in construction, and therefore mining activity, means sand is now the world's second most used natural resource.

This study also seeks to give a voice to some of the communities who are impacted by it and shine a light on the hidden stories behind the global headlines of sand mining.

Research by the team has shown how, locally, sand mining lowers the riverbed and increases riverbank instability, leading to bank collapse. Studies have also shown it impacts further afield, resulting in reduced sediment supply to the delta and a shrinking of the Tonle Sap lake, which supplies an estimated 70% of Cambodia's protein through fish.

These insights are highlighted in the exhibition and will be accompanied by further resources for schools to communicate this new research with broad audiences.

W www.rgs.org/lost-lands

Diets Savorn harvesting water mimosa © Andy Ball, University of Southampton



Early images from Everest

Take home a piece of history



Henry Morshead plate-taking with Ganga Singh standing to his right, 1921 © RGS-IBG

“Mountain shapes are often fantastic seen through a mist: these were like the wildest creation of a dream... Gradually, very gradually, we saw the great mountain sides and glaciers and arêtes, now one fragment and now another through the floating rifts, until far higher in the sky than imagination had dared to suggest the white summit of Everest appeared.”

George Mallory, from his account in the official publication of the expedition *Mount Everest: the Reconnaissance*, 1921, Edward Arnold & Co Ltd.

The first photographs of Mount Everest from the 1920s still have the power to capture our imagination and enable us to connect with these early expeditions organised by the Mount Everest Committee, which itself was created by the Society and the Alpine Club, London.

The Society is now home to the world's finest Everest photographic archive including work by skilled amateur George Mallory, from the reconnaissance expedition of 1921, alongside highly accomplished work of John Noel, who convinced the Mount Everest Committee about the importance of documenting expeditions on film and in stills photography. Noel employed the latest innovative technology of the day to create memorable and lasting images from the 1922 and 1924 expeditions.

He was the first to create an expectation from the public for images of Everest ascents, arguably culminating in the impact of the iconic images of Tenzing Norgay and Sir Edmund Hillary at the summit of Everest in 1953. These, along with images from all nine Everest expeditions organised by the MEC, are held within our archives.



Cedrahn Neel Base Camp, Rongbuk Glacier, 1922 © RGS-BG

The Society has recently completed a programme of digitisation to protect and preserve the images from the 1920s for posterity. In addition to enabling digital access for research and study by a wider range of users, it is now possible to purchase prints in various formats, including a selection of luxury platinum prints, produced in partnership with the publishers Salto-Ulbeek.

For more information on how to order prints, please visit our online print store or contact the Picture Library for specific requests.

E images@rgs.org

W www.rgsprintstore.com



Camp 1 at Summit, British Mount Everest Expedition 1922 © RGS-BG

Giving a spark of inspiration Gift membership

Give someone you love a gift that will spark inspiration and provide an outlet for them to explore the many facets of geography.

Gift membership allows you to give a gift that will last all year and offers innumerable opportunities to learn, connect and grow.

With Membership or Student Membership the Society will nurture an enthusiasm for all things geographical through events, exhibitions, lectures and resources.

There is much to dive into from the start, including event recordings, regional events, and exhibitions at the Society in London. With around 30 Monday night lectures to attend each year, monthly issues of *Geographical* magazine, and regular email updates, membership will keep them up to date with the latest geographical perspectives and allow them to explore remarkable stories of our planet's people and places from home or in-person.

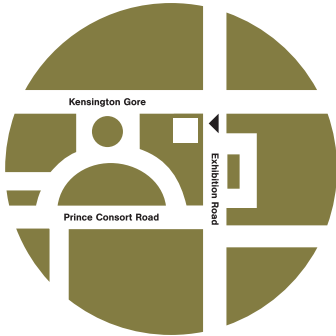
And if you reply to your gift application confirmation email with the code GIFT22, the gift membership will last 15 months for the cost of 12.

(Code valid until 31 December 2022)

Gift memberships purchased by 14 December will be guaranteed to arrive in time for Christmas. For more information on which gift membership is right for your loved one visit our website.

W www.rgs.org/gift

How to find us



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Cover image Bharley © Eileen McDougall



MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C018381

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

