

Championing geography

The world currently faces numerous challenges, from achieving sustainable food production to dealing with future migration, and the next generation of geographers will play a crucial role in helping society to understand and respond to those challenges. The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is helping to inspire this new generation of geographers through its ambassador scheme. Through the scheme, the Society is training and supporting undergraduate and postgraduate geographers from universities and businesses to act as ambassadors for geography in the classroom, where they demonstrate that geography is one of the most exciting, relevant and valuable subjects to study today.

The ambassador scheme has been running since 2006, and is a great way to introduce school pupils to the benefits

of studying geography beyond the compulsory stages. Ambassadors act as positive role models for pupils, illustrating the specific and transferable knowledge and skills that they've developed as geographers. Having grown significantly over the past five years, the scheme now has more than 1,300 ambassadors and 1,156 schools engaged across the country. Last year alone, it presented to more than 30,000 pupils.

For Jenny Austin, 23, the scheme offered a wonderful opportunity to share her enthusiasm for the subject with younger prospective students still unsure of which degree to choose. She became an ambassador following a talk by the Society at the University of Durham during her first year

studying geography. 'It's a fantastic scheme that helps to broaden views on what geography is, encourage young people to think about their future options, and gives them an opportunity to hear the honest thoughts of undergraduates on why geography is such an appealing degree,' she says.

Rob Sharpe, industry manager at Esri UK, a leader in geographic information systems (GIS) - an industry that's worth more than £1 billion - believes that the knowledge and skills that student geographers gain are very appealing to a wide range of employers. 'A geographic approach to learning is becoming increasingly important in the 21st century,' he says.

Esri UK became a corporate partner of the ambassadors scheme in 2010. Its staff have since been given the chance to become further involved, and a number have become GIS ambassadors. By connecting geography with the workplace,

the ambassadors scheme also demonstrates how studying geography is very relevant to a wide range of careers.

And geographers are clearly in demand; in a recent survey, unemployment rates for new geography graduates were significantly lower than those recorded for other subjects. 'Taking inspiration directly from the ambassador programme, and Esri's involvement in it, students will realise how relevant geography is in the workplace, and the wealth of careers that geography and GIS open up,' says Rob.

Geography ambassador Jenny is just one of many successful geography graduates, having used her skills and knowledge to earn a place on an in-house Masters course at sustainability charity Forum for the Future. And as she reflects on her time at university and as a geography ambassador, and looks to the future, she has one message for prospective students and ambassadors: 'Geography is a subject that not only excites and fascinates, but also opens your eyes to the world at large, and in so doing, it broadens your horizons and skills.'

■ If you would like to learn more about becoming a geography ambassador, or would like to arrange a visit to your school, please visit www.rgs.org/ambassadors or call 020 7591 3050



The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) promotes enjoyment and understanding of our world. Membership is open to all. You may use geography in your profession, have a thirst for geographical knowledge or a passion for travel. *Geographical* is the Society's magazine and is available as part of membership. To find out more, call the Membership Office on 020 7591 3080



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY (WITH IBG)

SELECTION OF EVENTS FOR APRIL

4 April, 7pm

Discovering People: Sandi Toksvig (Interview, London)

Join author, presenter and comedienne Sandi Toksvig as she talks about her influences and travels, from growing up in the USA to exploring Britain and rest of the world for her stimulating weekly travel programme *Excess Baggage*.

📍 Tickets: RGS-IBG members £7, non-members £10. Book online at www.rgs.org/whatson or call the Events Office on 020 7591 3100



12 April, 7.45pm

Hardest ice climb (Regional Theatres Programme, Brecon)

Join Tim Emmett for a hair-raising insight into a new world of ice and mixed climbing, including his ice climbing nemesis, Helmcken Falls cave in Canada. Discover the adrenaline-fuelled life of one of the UK's most audacious extreme-sports athletes. Venue: Theatr Brycheiniog, Canal Wharf, Brecon, LD3 7EW.

📍 For further details, visit www.rgs.org/whatson or call 01874 611 622. Repeated in Darlington on 19 April at 8pm

19 April, 8pm

The search for Khan (Lecture, Kendal)

Who and where was Genghis Khan, great leader and lover? Geoffrey Parkes gives a geographical perspective on the myth and reality of the secret history of the Mongols and Yuan Dynasty.

📍 For further details, visit www.rgs.org/northwest



23 April, 6.30pm

A whale of a problem (Lecture, London)

Marine biologist Michel Andre talks about the detrimental effects of artificial noise on marine mammals such as whales and dolphins, and discusses his attempts to develop acoustic technologies for managing oceanic noise pollution.

📍 Open to RGS-IBG members only. Bring your membership card for entry



24 April, 7pm

An energy policy for society (Lecture, Truro)

The UK is aiming to cut its carbon emissions by 80 per cent from 1990 levels by 2050. We all need to use electricity, heating and transport, but cuts can still be achieved through low-carbon technologies. Professor Catherine Mitchell argues that UK energy policy should complement the aspirations of wider society.

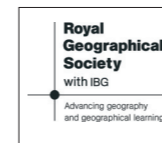
📍 For further details, visit www.rgs.org/southwest

30 April, 6.30pm

Carlton Marshes (Field Visit, near Lowestoft)

The 50 hectares of grazing marsh, fens and turf ponds that stretch down to Oulton Broad represent the Broads in miniature. Come on a two-hour guided walking tour of Carlton Marshes and surrounding marshland led by the Broads Authority. Bring walking boots.

For further details, visit www.rgs.org/eastanglia



The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is a leading world centre for geographers and geographical learning. One of our aims is to stimulate the awareness and enjoyment of the subject to a diverse range of people.

Geography is about the understanding of the people, places and environments of our world, the processes by which they are changing, and the interconnections between them - both locally and globally.

The Society carries out a wide range of activities to support these aims. We support research groups; promote geography within the national curriculum; produce scholarly publications; provide training in scientific field techniques and expeditions; offer information through our large map collection, library and picture library, and engage the wider public through our popular national lecture series.

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To find out about joining the Society, please contact us on

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