

Finding benefits

There's no such thing as a typical Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) member. Whether your passion lies in travel or the 'great outdoors', or you have a keen interest in the geographical challenges that face humanity in the 21st century, the Society has something for everyone.

With a thriving and vibrant geographical community made up of professional geographers, young ambassadors and geography enthusiasts, Society membership is growing every year. The biggest increase in numbers has come from young geographers eager to share their enthusiasm for the world, its people, cultures and environment with like-minded individuals.

For young geographer Lucy Smith, who is currently studying for her A-Levels, joining the Society offered a chance to gain further insight into the subject and help with her studies. 'After a recent school trip to Iceland gave me the inspiration to learn more about geography, I thought that the Society would be the best next step,' she says. 'I joined to gain access to the abundant resources, including the excellent library facilities, as well as to attend lectures in London and locally, so that I could hear first-hand from experts. I hope it will help me to reach my objective of studying geography at degree level.'

Fellows and members play a huge role in supporting the Society's work to advance geography, both financially and intellectually. They're involved in many of the day-to-day activities at the Society, from volunteer work on panels and regional committees to contributing to research groups and Society projects. Their generous contributions helped to create a new Members Room last year and to provide the collections with new and interesting resources.

The creation of regional branches in England and Wales since the late 1980s - and recently in Northern Ireland - has also seen membership growth in many new areas, not to mention a wealth of new events and talks. The branches, run by local volunteer Fellows with modest central support from the Society headquarters, have shown the sterling commitment of 'regional' Fellows and the pivotal role they play.

Stuart Hepburn became a Fellow in 1979 after numerous visits to Lowther Lodge during the mid-1970s to



research Himalayan peaks and mountaineering objectives. Since then, he has been heavily involved in helping the regional branches to grow as a northwest regional committee member. His involvement was recognised at the recent 20th Anniversary Regional Awards, as part of the Society's Medal and Awards Ceremony.

'Reaching out and involving the regions in spreading the word about geography is, in my mind, one of the best things the Society has ever engaged in, and has been a resounding success in publicising what the Society does for the discipline to the public at large,' Stuart says. 'For me, the more you're involved, the more you can get out of it. My best times have been when I'm organising a regional seminar, running a field trip, manning the Society stalls at a talk or even delivering a lecture or two. It feels like one big team.'

For many professionals who regularly use geographical skills and knowledge, one of the biggest draws to joining the Society is the opportunity to gain internationally recognised professional accreditation in the form of Chartered Geographer (CGeog) status. Angela Baker became a member in 2006 for the array of benefits on offer and so that she could apply to the programme, which she believed would help to show her commitment and passion for the discipline. The CGeog programme is a definite

investment in your career and personal development. I couldn't recommend it enough,' she says. 'It brings with it so many intangible benefits, from being exposed to issues and challenges in areas of the discipline that you may not otherwise have come across to being involved at a closer level with the staff at the Society. It's a worthwhile programme and a great way to network with others, not just within your industry, but within the general discipline.'

With members from all over the globe and a diversity of ages and professional backgrounds, the Society is as thriving and as open as it has ever been. As Fellow and acclaimed travel writer Colin Thubron says: 'Solitary travellers can discover a warmly compatible community at the Society.'

Biologist Niall MccAnn joined the Society to help further his research and career in biogeography. 'Aside from the opportunity to involve myself in many talks and seminars, I hope to be inspired by - and to help to inspire - other Fellows and members, meeting people involved in modern-day exploration along the way,' he says. 'I'm looking forward to using the reading room and library more, and the other innumerable resources available at the Society, both human and material, will be of great benefit to my career in the years to come.'

In a recent Society survey, the majority of members



stated that their reasons for joining weren't primarily for the benefits, but to support geography as a discipline and the Society as a charity. As regional Fellow Stuart Hepburn sums up: 'To paraphrase a quote from John F Kennedy, "Ask not what geography can do for you - ask what you can do for geography." Joining the Society is really one of the best ways you can do this.'

■ To learn more about joining the Society, visit www.rgs.org/joinus or call the Membership Office on 020 7591 3080



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 NOVEMBER

6 November, 9am-4.30pm

What keeps the UK healthy? Geographical perspectives on work and worklessness (Environment and Society Forum/Geography of Health Research Group)

This seminar will consider how the health and wellbeing of individuals and local communities in the UK have been affected by the economic downturn, and will also look at the challenges posed by long-term worklessness.

i For further details, visit www.rgs.org/environmentandsociety

8 November, 7.30pm

The exploration of the Nile Basin (Explore the Archives showcase, Leeds)

Investigate the history of Nile exploration through a collection of iconic items held in the Society's archives. This fascinating tour of the past will be led by Eugene Rae, the Society's principal librarian. Venue: The Grammar School at Leeds, Alwoodley Gates, Harrogate Road, Leeds, LS17 8GS.

i Tickets: £2.50. For further information, visit www.rgs.org/yorkshireandnortheast

13 November, 7pm

Unsustainable fishing (21st Century Challenges)



How can we avoid the collapse of a resource that remains both an essential part of our global food security and vital to the communities and livelihoods of half a billion people spread across the planet? Join our expert panel to discover more.

i Tickets: RGS-IBG members £7; non-members £10. For further information and online booking, visit www.21stcenturychallenges.org

14 November, 5.15pm

A sustainable future for wildlife and people: is it possible? (Lecture, Bath)

Wildlife is getting progressively less 'wild' as people modify more of the planet. Simon Garrett of Bristol Zoo will provide a thought-provoking insight into the problem and ask: How much wildlife do we need, or even like? Do we need tigers, sparrows or tree snails? Joint lecture with Bath University GULP lecture series.

i For further information, visit www.rgs.org/westandsouthwales

20 November, 7.30pm

Acid oceans: the other CO₂ problem (Lecture, Keswick)

The consequences of increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere have been widely discussed, but it's less well known that a considerable amount of CO₂ has dissolved in the sea, with potentially disastrous consequences. Professor Nicholas Owens will discuss some of the ramifications. Joint event with the Keswick Lecture Society.

i Tickets: free to RGS-IBG and KLS members; others £4. For further information, visit www.rgs.org/northwest

22 November, 7.30pm

Georgia to Afghanistan (Lecture, Southampton)

John Pilkington presents an intriguing update of his continuing exploration of the heart of Central Asia - this time from the Caucasus to Samarkand and on to the High Pamirs of Tajikistan and the source of the Oxus. Venue: Lecture Theatre A, School of Geography, University of Southampton, SO17 1BJ (use South Entrance).

i Tickets: RGS-IBG members (and one guest): £5 each; others £10. For further information, visit www.rgs.org/south

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 its 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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