

Unravelling the stories behind Britain's landscapes



All Saints church, Marlow, as seen from the lock on the River Thames

From the historic ports and maritime tales of Harwich and Portsmouth to the changing fortunes of coal-mining towns in the Welsh Valleys and South Yorkshire, the Society's Discovering Britain series of geographically themed walks continues to grow.

The series, which was launched last year, now has more than 70 interactive walks exploring Britain's many diverse landscapes. There are walks by the seaside, in the countryside and in towns and cities. Collectively, they look at how the forces of nature, people, events and the economy have shaped our past and present.

Whether you're interested in learning about regeneration, conservation, transportation, rural industries, chalk grasslands land ownership or coastal processes, there's a walk for you.

The walk along the River Thames from Marlow to Bourne End explores the physical characteristics of the Middle Thames – its width and its bends, its floodplain and its sediments, fish and wildfowl. Walkers will also discover how people earned their livelihoods along the banks of the river and hear some unusual tales about wild woods, 'puppy pie', a cardboard castle and the mysteries of Peterswood.

Stories of Britain's changing landscapes are uncovered around Grimethorpe in South Yorkshire. The walk tells of shifting fortunes in the times before, during and after when coal was king. Visitors following the audio or written commentary that accompany this and every other walk will discover former industrial sites and new factories, fields and woods, residential streets and community institutions.

The Discovering Britain walks visit stunning parts of the UK,

from prehistoric sites on Salisbury Plain to the challenging climb of Great Dun Fell, to uncover the stories of ever-changing landscapes,' said the Society's director, Dr Rita Gardner. 'Our walks simply explain the geographical processes that formed these landscapes, and raise important questions about human activities and interventions.'

The Discovering Britain website is thriving, with new content and walks added every week. Three walks in South Devon were recently launched, exploring the cliffs and coves near Babbacombe, discovering Teignmouth's hidden side, and following the coast path from there to Dawlish Warren.

These walks have been created by Teignmouth resident Pat Wilson, an honorary Society Fellow and former senior lecturer in geography and geology. A few years ago, she moved from landlocked Bedfordshire to live by the sea in South Devon. 'Of course, I love walking along the coast for the sea air and lovely views but there's so much more to it than that. Through these walks, I wanted to encourage people to stop and look a little closer at what's around them,' she said.

The website also features highly recommended walks by other organisations, including a series of audio trails in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and set of walks in the Cornish Mining World Heritage site. 'We hope that people from across the UK will explore the fabulously diverse geography that is on all of our doorsteps,' said Dr Gardner. ■ *To keep up to date with the latest new walks on the site, or to get involved by creating a walk, email the team (discoveringbritain@rgs.org) to sign up for the Discovering Britain e-newsletter. For further information, visit www.discoveringbritain.org*



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY (WITH IBG)

SELECTION OF EVENTS FOR MARCH

13 March, 7.30pm

Migratory beekeeping in the USA (Lecture, Cheltenham)

Commercial US beekeepers run large, 'industrial' operations that rely on the practice of migratory beekeeping. Professor Adam Hart will examine the practice and its effects on bee health, and discuss the future of beekeeping. Venue: Room TCO01, School of Natural & Social Sciences, Francis Close Hall Campus, University of Gloucestershire, GL50 4HZ.

i Tickets are free. To book, email Dr Phillip Toms at ptomsg@glos.ac.uk

14 March, 7.30pm

Painting the Bengal tiger (Lecture, Chester)

Polyanna Pickering, one of the world's foremost wildlife artists and a campaigner for conservation and animal welfare, talks about her expedition to the Himalaya to record the Bengal tiger through painting. Joint meeting with the Cheshire Lecture Society. Venue: The Grosvenor Museum, Grosvenor Street, Chester, CH1 2DD.

i Tickets: RGS-IBG members free; £5 donation requested from non-members. For further details, visit www.rgs.org/cheshireandnorthwales

15 March, 11am

Ice river: To Zanskar in winter (Lecture and lunch, West Sussex)

Paul Howard and Tanzin Norbu will describe their winter journey along a frozen river gorge to the isolated Himalayan kingdom of Zanskar, and will outline changes to the area since Tanzin's childhood there. Venue: Danny House, Hurstpierpoint, BN6 9BB.

i Tickets: RGS-IBG members and one guest free; non-members £5; please book in advance. Optional lunch is additional £15. For further details, visit www.rgs.org/south

18 March, 2.30pm

Dr Livingstone I presume? (Be Inspired, London)

Dr Sarah Worden, curator of the National Museum of Scotland's special exhibition, Dr Livingstone I Presume?, will reveal how David Livingstone has been a catalyst for new connections between Scotland and Africa today.

i Tickets: RGS-IBG members free, non-members £5; pre-booking required. Call 020 7591 3044 or email showcase@rgs.org



20 March, 7pm

Discovering Places: Malawi

An informative evening for travellers who wish to experience Malawi for the first time. Come along and discover more at the exhibitor stands and ask questions of our expert panel. Our Spring Discovering Places destination marks the bicentenary of the birth of David Livingstone.

i Tickets: RGS-IBG members £10, non-members £15. Price includes wine and an information pack. For further information, visit www.rgs.org/travel or call 020 7591 3100

27 March, 6.30pm

Geographical journeys: microlectures (Younger Members' event, London)

An evening of illustrated ten-minute micro-lectures on recent geographical journeys, with discussion in the bar afterwards. Lectures will be presented by the 'next generation' of intrepid travellers, selected by the Society's Younger Members' Committee following an audition process. Speaker line-up and lecture details to be announced in late February.

i Tickets: RGS-IBG members £7, non-members £10. Visit www.rgs.org/whatson or call 020 7591 3100

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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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