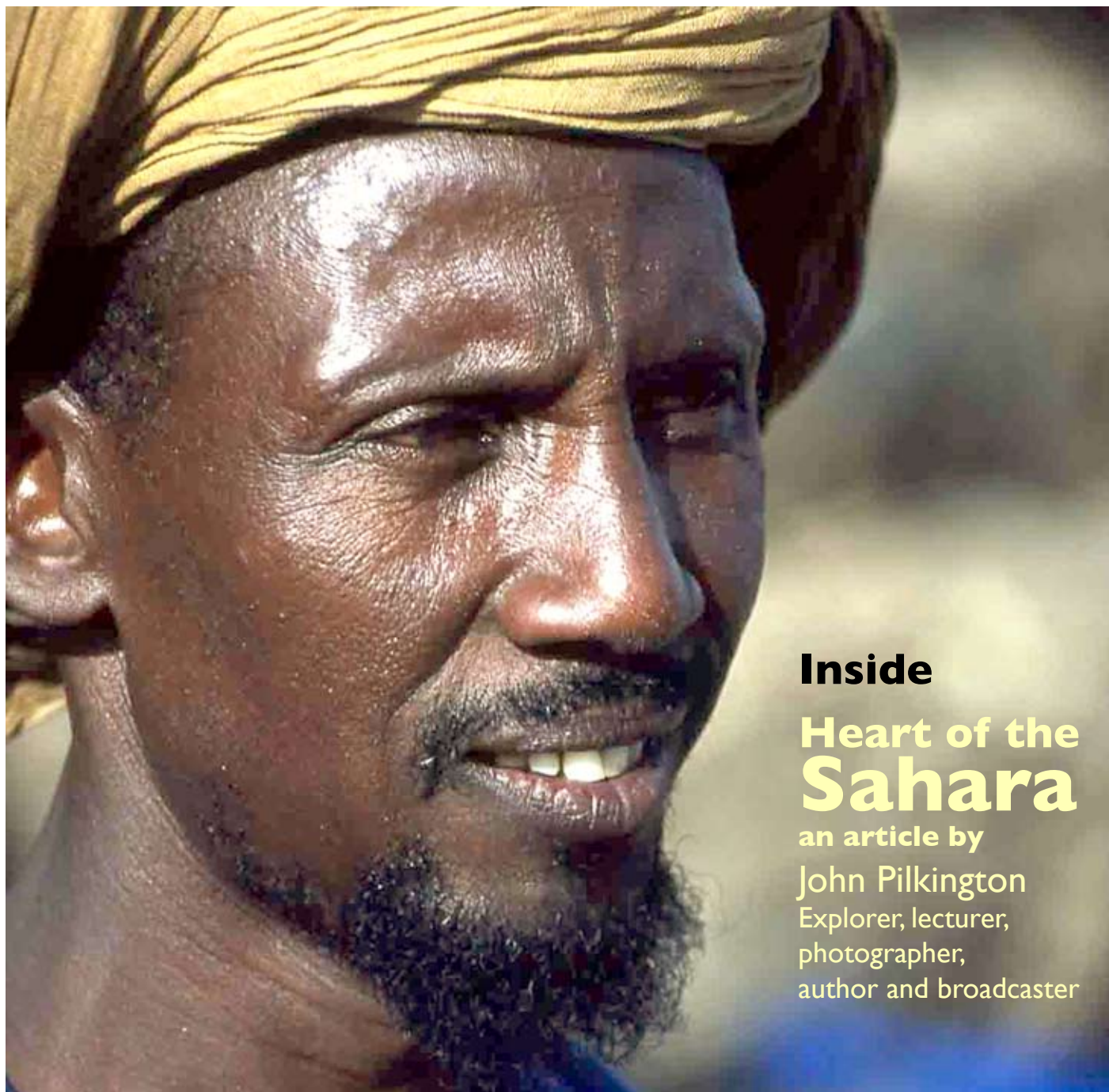


SUMMER 2008

# LANDMARK

THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY



**Inside**

## Heart of the Sahara

an article by

John Pilkington

Explorer, lecturer,  
photographer,  
author and broadcaster

*Alumni*  
ISSUE NUMBER 2



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE  
Department of Geography

# WELCOME

Welcome to the second edition of "Landmark", the alumni newsletter of the Department of Geography at Cambridge University. Whenever you graduated we hope that through the newsletter will you help gain a sense of how we are developing and above all to provide you with a means of remaining in contact with us and those who have graduated from the department over at least the last 80 years



Prof. Richard Smith

The newsletter is now distributed electronically since we feel this is likely to be the speediest and most cost-effective way of sustaining links with the largest possible number of alumni. In the current issue we are especially pleased to publish information about the activities of certain alumni since their graduation. We have received a very pleasing number of responses to our request made in the first newsletter for details of your activities and while we are able to publish but a few of these they are already beginning to generate an intriguing and extremely valuable archive of your experience and achievements are especially revealing about what being a Cambridge geographer implies for a subsequent life course

You will note that this year from 26-28 September we are participating in the university-wide alumni weekend with tours of and exhibitions in the department and during that weekend Professor Bill Adams holder of the Moran Chair of Conservation and Development in the department will be giving a lecture on 'The Political Ecology of Conservation' which we encourage you to attend. We will be delighted to see as many of you at this weekend as possible when we will take an opportunity to gain further feedback on the newsletter and a sense of issues that you feel you would like to have featured in future issues as well as suggestions on how we can best maintain contact with and stimulate the interests of alumni.

We hope that other items in this issue to do with staff whether former or current and student activities will also interest you and provide a sense of how the subject is developing and how those of us in Downing Place are helping to shape it.

Of course you will be able to find fuller details of our activities in the department website.

*Professor Richard Smith*

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**"The standard of our work is manifest in two ways: the first, and less important to my mind being the published work of the staff, and by far the most important being the calibre of the men and women we send out into the world as geographers."**

**W W William, arguing during the Tripos revision of 1949 and quoted in "A Hundred Years of Geography at Cambridge",**

**D R Stoddart, 1988.**

## LANDMARK

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Cover photograph: John Pilkington



# Department news

## Outreach



The Department hosts sixth form lectures in association with the local branch of the Geographical Association. During 2007-08 talks were given by Dr Sarah Damery (Department of Geography, University of Birmingham) on managing flood risk, Dr Matthew Hunt (Royal Haskoning Consultants) on the consequences of climate change for Cambridgeshire, and Dr Emma Mawdsley (Department of Geography, University of Cambridge) on how China is changing Africa. In July each year the Department holds two Open Days for schools.

In addition we host a Sutton Trust Summer School for year 12 pupils. This is for able young people from non-privileged backgrounds who are considering going to university to read Geography. They get a taste of undergraduate study, going on a fieldtrip to the Breckland to collect soil and vegetation data, analysis of this in the physical labs, a human geography lecture and an informal supervision. These summer schools have been very successful in stimulating participants interest and a few of them have gone on to apply, successfully, to read Geography at Cambridge.



**Dr Harriet Allen** is a University Lecturer and Fellow of Girton College. To find out more about Harriet go to: [www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/allen/](http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/allen/)

## Staff profile



### Dr Molly Warrington

University Senior Lecturer;  
Fellow of Homerton College  
and Director of Studies, King's College

Molly Warrington's research falls within the field of social geography, with a particular focus on gender. Her current project explores aspects of identity construction amongst 15-year-old students in English state schools and the conflicts, tensions and pressures they experience. Teachers, and often parents, frequently measure success at school in terms of academic results, while the students themselves have to balance these demands in order to conform to peer group norms and expectations. One of the key aspects of the research therefore, given the particular salience of the peer group in middle adolescence, is to investigate the relationships between students' academic and social self-concept, and how this plays out in different places, and in different ways for boys and girls.

For further information see:

<http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/warrington/>

## Arrivals



### Dr Michael Herzog

University Lecturer in Atmospheric Science: Numerical Modelling of dynamical and microphysical processes from local to global scales

Dr Michael Herzog joins us having spent two years as a visiting scientist at NOAA Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory at Princeton, New Jersey. Michael has a PhD in Geophysical Sciences from Max-Planck-Institute of Meteorology in Hamburg, Germany. His research activities and interests include the development of atmospheric models from local to global scales; modelling of convective clouds and volcanic plumes; the role of convection in the climate system, understanding of the hydrological cycle in present and future climate; and understanding the role of aerosols in present and future climate, and the impact of aerosols on dynamical and microphysical processes.

For further information see:

<http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/herzog/>



### Dr Andrew Friend

University Senior Lecturer  
in Environmental Science  
and Fellow of Clare College

Dr Andrew Friend joins us having spent time since 2003 time at LSCE, Saclay, in France. His research interests focus on the use of numerical models to study vegetation-environment interactions, plant ecophysiology, and feedbacks between global change and biospheric processes at a wide range of scales

Andrew has provided us with a very interesting article on page 6 of this newsletter.

For further information see:

<http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/friend>

## Senior Promotions 2008

*Our congratulations go to*

**Dr Sarah Radcliffe**  
on being promoted to a Reader,  
and to **Dr Michael Bravo**  
and **Dr Mia Gray**  
on their promotion  
to Senior Lecturers.

# Departures



## Dr Alan Baker

I retired from my post in the Department in 2001. Released from teaching and administering in the University, I have been able to expand in other directions.

Having published in 1999 my book on work-related voluntary associations (such as agricultural cooperatives and mutual aid societies) in the Loire valley during the nineteenth century, I have turned my attentions to leisure-related associations (such as sports clubs and musical societies) throughout France. This has required visits to archives départementales in eight, carefully selected, regions. Alongside that new project, I achieved a long-standing ambition, completing a book on the relations of geography and history (published in 2003). In addition, I co-edited a book of essays on the historical geography of the North-South divide in England (published in 2004). In 2002 a new chapter of my retirement began.

I was elected to the Lib Dem controlled Cambridge City Council. As a geographer, I was immediately put on to the Planning Committee and have been its Chair since 2003. Cambridge is being required by central government to grow enormously – between 1999 and 2016, we have to provide a minimum of 12,500 new homes (flats and houses) in the city, some 6,000 within the existing built-up area and 6,500 in new urban extensions. Many of the proposed developments are highly controversial. Lobby groups in Cambridge are very knowledgeable and highly articulate – and so quite a challenge!

Having been an historical geographer for almost 50 years, I am now enjoying my new role as an applied geographer, helping to shape Cambridge's future. Of course, retirement has also meant more time for family, friends and foreign places.



## Dr James Brasington

James was appointed as a University Assistant Lecturer in physical geography in October 2000 following short periods at Bristol and Hull Universities. James is a geomorphologist and hydrologist who

works on modelling channel and floodplain dynamics in meandering and braided rivers - of considerable importance in the context of water management and assessing flood risk. He moved to a Readership at the University of Aberystwyth in 2007 where he heads up the River Basin Dynamics



## Dr Al James

Last year we also said a fond farewell to Dr. Al James. Al knew the Department in many guises – he arrived as undergraduate student at Fitzwilliam College in 1996; continued his studies here as a graduate student under the supervision of Dr Mia Gray; and finally,

become a lecturer in economic geography and a fellow at Fitzwilliam College. So, he was truly one of our own! His research on the cultural embeddedness of the economy and on gender and work-life balance in the labour market quickly established him as an important scholar in the field. In 2007, he moved to Queen Mary University of London and is the programme convenor for their MSc in Globalisation and Development. He continues to be missed by staff and students alike!



## Dr Dan Low-Beer

Dan joined the Department in 2000 as a University Assistant Lecturer in Human Geography. In his research he became very closely involved in the evaluation of the LoveLife programme, a project aimed at reducing the level of HIV amongst South

African youth. He worked principally at the population level, concerned to assess the effectiveness of different interventions. Dan resigned his post in the Department in 2006 in order to take up the post of Senior Manager in the Strategic Information and Evaluation division of the WHO's Global Fund which fights AIDS, TB and malaria.



## Dr Andy Shepherd

Andy joined the Department in 2002 as a University Assistant Lecturer in Physical Geography. His research field is ice-sheet glaciology and quantitative remote sensing, a technology which he

applies to problems of the cryosphere. He was based in the Scott Polar Research Institute where he contributed to our work, both research and teaching, on the science of climate change. Andy moved to a Readership in Remote Sensing of the Cryosphere in the School of Geosciences at the University of Edinburgh in 2006.



## Christine Hollinshead

In January this year, we sadly said goodbye to our Senior Accounts Clerk, Christine Hollinshead, when she took early retirement. Christine had been with the department for nearly 10 years, during

which time she became a stalwart support to the Accounts department. As well as being conscientious and professional at work, many people will remember Christine for the Xmas Draw she organised each year - which was a source of great fun for all staff. She was also well known for her baking – her delicious mince pies and cakes were always in demand. Christine will be missed very much and we wish her all the best in her retirement.



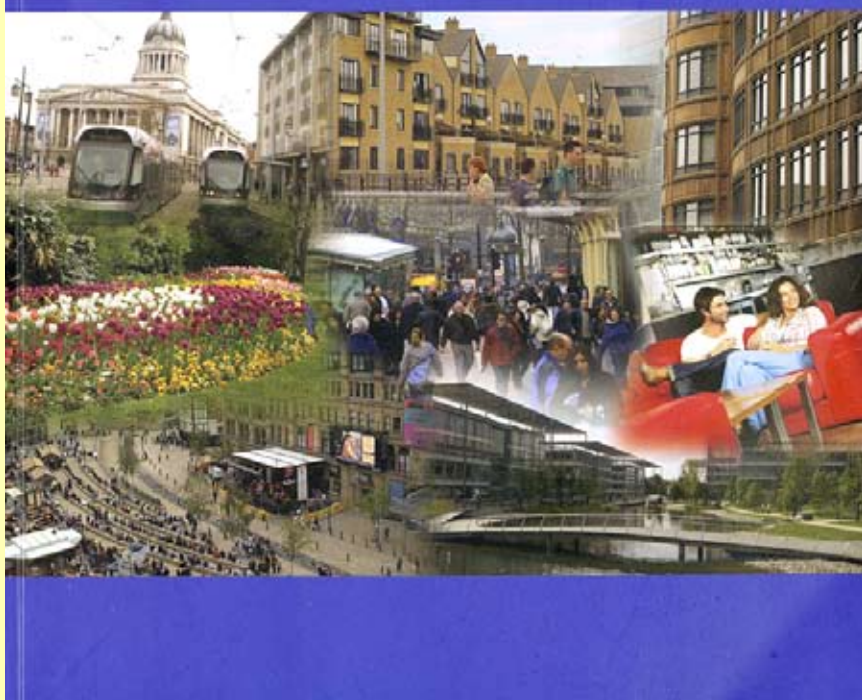
# Constructing an Evolutionary Economic Geography

By Professor Ron Martin



## State of the English Cities

### The Competitive Economic Performance of English Cities



Over the past couple of years Ron has been exploring the scope for and potential of applying ideas from evolutionary economics, and from evolutionary science more generally, to the field of economic geography. In a world of rapid technological innovation, increasing globalisation and intensifying international competition, understanding how the economic landscape changes and adapts over time to these developments is a challenging task.

Evolutionary economic theory and concepts can assist in this endeavour because the focus of such ideas is precisely on how economies transform themselves from within. Ron's research in this field is concerned with constructing an evolutionary economic geography that draws on notions such as variety, selection, retention, fitness, adaptation and inheritance from modern evolutionary biology and evolutionary dynamics, and related ideas of emergence and self-organisation from complexity theory. His work is both theoretical and empirical. To this end he has been collaborating with a small group of like-minded economic geographers at Utrecht University, as well as with a number of European evolutionary economists. Professor Martin's research has attracted support from various funding bodies. In

early-2006, in conjunction with Professor Ron Boschma at Utrecht, Ron was awarded a European Science Foundation grant to hold a three-day workshop in Cambridge on Evolutionary Economic Geography that involved a number of the leading international evolutionary economists and geographers interested in this approach. The papers from that workshop have formed the basis of two major publications – a special issue of the *Journal of Economic Geography* (September, 2007) on Evolutionary Economic Geography, and a forthcoming book, *Handbook of Evolutionary Economic Geography* (2008, Edward Elgar, in press). In addition, working with Professor James Simmie at Oxford Brookes University, in 2007 Ron secured a substantial grant from NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) to explore the application of evolutionary ideas to explain the innovative performance of British cities over the past quarter of a century: a report on this work will be published in Summer 2008.

This project also involved a Cambridge workshop that brought together scholars from economics and economic geography working on evolutionary approaches. This event, in conjunction with the ESF funded workshop, has resulted in an international research network on evolutionary approaches to economic geography.

Also in 2007, Ron was awarded a three-year Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship to work on the role of path dependence in the evolution of regional economies. The central idea of path dependence is that social and economic systems inherit the legacies of their past development, and that these legacies condition in various ways the nature and direction of future development trajectories: simply put, 'history matters'. One aspect of path dependence concerns whether and how industrial, technological and institutional paths – and hence regional economic paths – become 'locked-in', and what the processes are that promote such 'lock-in'.

Another aspect concerns how and where new paths are created and emerge. And yet another seeks to understand why and how established

paths of development break up and dissolve.

Ron's research will seek both to develop the theoretical framework for a path-dependence perspective on regional economic evolution, and to use this perspective to examine the dynamics of regional economic adaptation in the UK, EU and elsewhere.



**Professor Ron Martin** is a Professor of Economic Geography, Fellow, Cambridge-MIT Institute, Research Associate, Centre for Business Research Professorial Fellow, St Catharine's College.

To find out more about Ron go to:  
[www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/martin/](http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/martin/)



## Geography field trips

By Ewan Livingston

In spring 2007 a group of nineteen students, accompanied by Dr Mia Gray and Dr Molly Warrington, travelled to Berlin for five days.

Travelling to our hotel on the first night, bitter cold and communist high-rise flats as far as the eye could see made our first impression of the city more akin to Moscow. However three days of group research followed by two days of personal projects and investigation revealed a vibrant, varied and, perhaps most strikingly, dynamic city.

Staying in the old East Berlin gave a valuable insight into the urban form of communism. After the reunification of West and East, Berlin expected a mass influx of people into the city - an influx that never really materialised. As a result, vast areas of the East appeared as ghost-town, sparsely populated and sprawling. The streets seemed empty and eerily quiet. However a short tram ride away were vibrant, thriving communities. Indeed there are areas of the East that would not seem out of place in any Western European city, and likewise areas of the West that felt more Soviet than anything else. Mass urban redevelopment is slowly but surely changing the already varied landscape of Berlin. For example, investigation into the use of 'temporary spaces' for a variety of purposes revealed both the abundance of available land in the city, and the determination of its citizens to make it a better place to live.

Any investigation into contemporary Berlin requires, however, an appreciation of its history. Amongst other things, we visited the Holocaust Memorial, Check-Point Charlie, and were constantly reminded of a more divided past by the remnants of the Berlin Wall that scatter the city. In the final few days of the trip, students carried out individual research into any area of their choosing. The choices made were, unsurprisingly, varied, ranging from investigations into the views of Berliners about the appropriateness of retaining parts of the Berlin Wall, to the use of street art in the city. Berlin was only introduced as a field trip option this year, but

it will be happening again. The popularity of the trip was self-evident, and the variety of areas investigated made for an interesting and stimulating five days, thoroughly enjoyed by all the students involved (and I assume the staff too!) Perhaps this popularity can best be summed up by recalling the constant talking on the first couple of days about the other trips to more exotic locations (particularly when we were outside in sub-zero temperatures). This talk subsided however as the trip progressed, and by the end the topic was barely mentioned.



*Thanks must go to Dr Mia Gray and Dr Molly Warrington for organising and running an excellent field trip, one which future students will hopefully enjoy for years to come.*

## Funding for Field Trips

**The Department of Geography runs several field trips each year, the Berlin trip above being one of them, providing students with a valuable learning experience.**

**Sadly, funds are running low and unlike the Colleges the Department is very under-funded. If you would like to financially support us to ensure we are able to continue running our field trips we would welcome this greatly.**

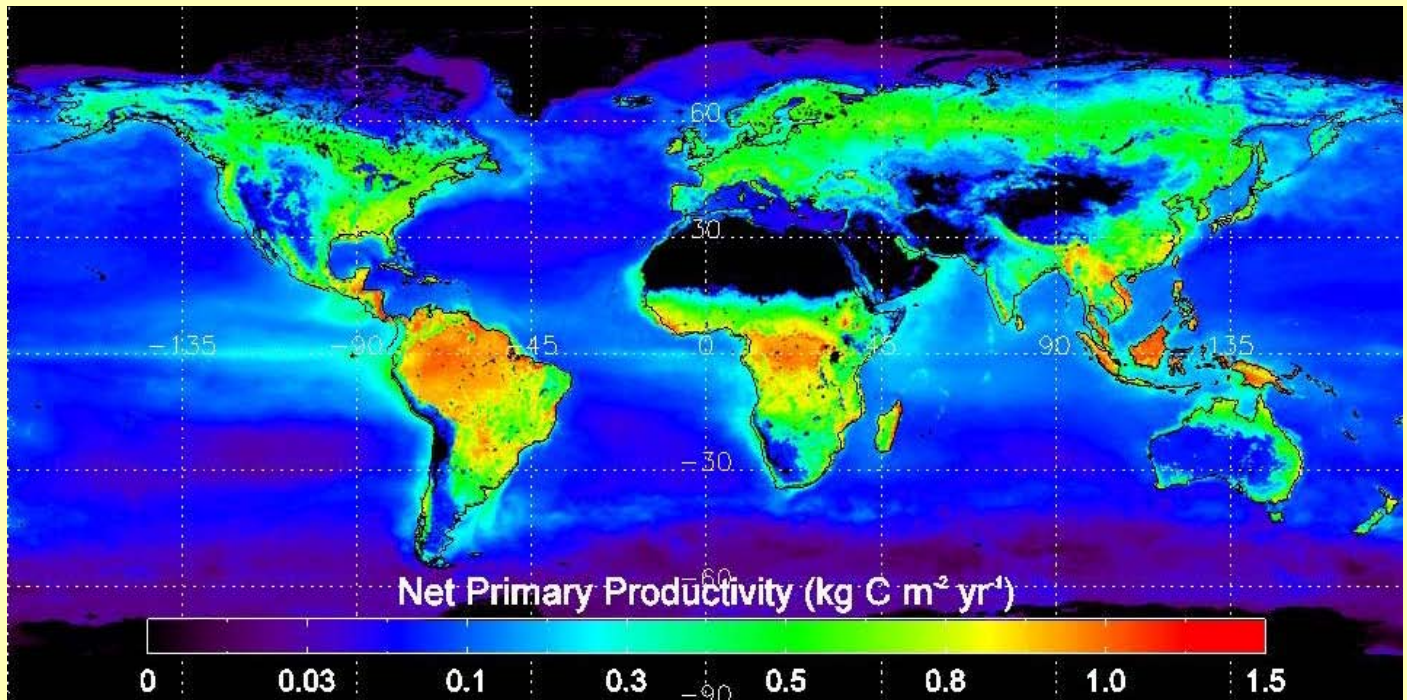
**Please email [alumni@geog.cam.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@geog.cam.ac.uk) in the first instance.**

**Can you help?**



# The Functioning of Terrestrial Ecosystems

By Dr Andrew Friend



Global distribution of plant productivity (i.e. photosynthesis minus respiration) simulated by state-of-the-art process-based models of terrestrial and marine photosynthesis. Values are the means of years 2000-2006, and are derived using satellite-based estimates of surface chlorophyll content and observed distributions of terrestrial vegetation types and soil properties. Marine values come from Mike Behrenfeld (pers. comm.).

My research interests primarily concern the functioning of terrestrial ecosystems (vegetation and soils) and how they interact with their physical environment. Understanding environmental controls on vegetation is important because all food and fibre on which humanity depends has its origin in photosynthesis and terrestrial ecosystems play a major role in the dynamics of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, the most important anthropogenic greenhouse gas. Therefore there is tremendous interest in forecasting potential impacts of environmental change on terrestrial ecosystems and feedbacks on climate through the global carbon cycle.

The world's vegetation (including marine phytoplankton) and soils have been providing humanity with a little appreciated yet critical service – the sequestering of over 50% of anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (mainly resulting from the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation) since the beginning of the industrial revolution. Without this service the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere would have risen twice as fast as observed, with consequent greater changes in Earth's climate. Despite the obvious importance of this net uptake, it has proved difficult to attribute it to particular processes and, perhaps more importantly, predict its future behaviour. We now believe that about half of this net uptake has occurred in the oceans, and therefore the rest of this "sink" must be on land. However there is no consensus as to the process or processes that might be responsible. Without this knowledge it is not possible to predict future atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations, and hence climate, even if we knew future anthropogenic emissions.

Understanding the potential impacts of future climate change and atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations on terrestrial ecosystems is also important for many other reasons, including the services ecosystems provide humans and their intrinsic value. We would like to know not only responses of processes that will determine the future status of the terrestrial CO<sub>2</sub> sink such as photosynthesis, respiration, and growth, but also changes in attributes such as distribution, biodiversity, and resilience. While we have a relatively good understanding of fundamental ecosystem processes for specific sites and

species, major challenges remain in scaling this knowledge up in time and space to answer questions of future responses at regional and global scales.

I am trying to address these issues by building mechanistic numerical models of terrestrial ecosystem dynamics that aim to predict the distribution and attributes of global vegetation and soils from the underlying processes. These models can be used "off-line", with inputs from observations of past, and scenarios of future, climate and atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> to predict ecosystem responses, and they can be coupled to global climate/biogeochemistry models to explore feedbacks through changes in land surface-atmosphere water and energy exchange and the global carbon cycle. One striking finding is that uncertainty concerning how terrestrial ecosystem physiology responds to climate change is similar to the uncertainty with respect to future economic growth and technological development for anticipating levels of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, and hence climate change, to the end of this century! Key processes are the responses of photosynthesis to CO<sub>2</sub> and respiration to temperature, as well as the ability of ecosystems to adapt to unfavourable climatic regimes caused by changing rainfall patterns and increasing temperatures. By continuing to develop and test models across a wide range of scales I hope to reduce these uncertainties and produce improved predictions of the properties of future ecosystems and their interaction with atmospheric processes.



**Dr Andrew Friend**

University Senior Lecturer  
in Environmental Science  
and Fellow of Clare College

For further information see

<http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/friend/>



## Ageing over time

By Professor Richard Smith

Richard Smith as well as currently being Head of Department has since 1994 directed the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (Campop), which formally became incorporated in to the department in 2001 as a component of the Historical and Cultural Geography Research Cluster. The Group has a long association with the department having been co-founded in 1964 by Tony (now Sir Tony) Wrigley when he was a Cambridge Geography lecturer. Campop has made major international contributions to the development of historical demography and the demographic correlates of a host of social and economic changes over the long term. One of Richard's principal interests concerns the determinants of longevity, the ageing of populations and the welfare consequences of these processes. His research on these subjects and that of Campop have been substantially funded by ESRC, the Wellcome and Leverhulme Trusts and involves collaborations with Jim Oeppen, for long a member of Campop but currently with the Max Planck Institute of Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany.

Richard's work engages with one of the most notable achievements of modern societies, which is a large rise in human longevity. Since 1700 life expectancy at birth in Britain (and many other parts of Europe) has more than doubled from about 35 to nearly 80 years. Recent mortality trends are well established but there is considerable disagreement about the initiation of the trends and among demographers and biologists there are very different interpretations of what lies ahead. Historical analysis has certainly exposed the problematic status of a belief that the expectation of life cannot rise much above its current supposed maximal extent. Pessimists believe that we are approaching limits to life expectancy while those who look more optimistically at trends over time and give considerable weight to historical analysis expect there to be continued improvements to life expectancy.

Biological pessimists believe that future life expectancy has an upper limit of about 85 years since they consider mortality after the reproductive age to lie beyond the reach of Darwinian forces of natural selection. As a consequence they believe in the existence of an "intrinsic" biologically determined age pattern of senescent mortality and that the upper limits of that longevity will remain invariant. All improvements in longevity the pessimists view as the result of the eradication of premature mortality among children and young adults, most of which has occurred. Up to a decade ago this pessimistic view held centre stage. It led to a sequence of projections of maximal life extent by governments and agencies such as the United Nations being massively understated. For instance, each time a 'natural' limit has been proposed it has been exceeded. In the 1920s eminent demographers thought that the maximal lifespan was a little under 65 years of age when in the USA it was around 57 years.

Historical analysis undertaken collaboratively in the department and at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, Germany has focused on life expectancy trends among countries that in any one year had the highest documented life expectancy. In 1840 life expectancy is thought to have been highest among Swedish women who lived on average 45 years. Today the longest life expectancy is to be found among Japanese women who exceed 85 years. The additional 45 years added to a record-breaking low, or what might be regarded as 'best practice' mortality have since the early nineteenth century been secured at a remarkably constant rate through time of almost 3 months a year. It might be suggested that this may be the most remarkable indication of the regularity of mass endeavour ever observed. Record male longevity has risen somewhat more slowly but has been almost equally linear in form over the same period. These historical investigations would seem to have exposed an illuminating case of the foibles of science. While it would be nonsensical, on the basis of the time trends discovered to promote the idea of the attainment of eternity among humans or even an untrammelled route to a life expectancy at birth of 100 years in 2060 as some enthusiasts have done, it does seem certain that centenarians will soon become commonplace individuals in our midst. There appears to be no link between the pace of change of improvement at higher ages and the level of old-age mortality. If such links existed then it might be expected that countries close to the upper level of contemporary 'best practice' should show the slowest rates of improvement. No such relationship can be found in the past 160 years nor in the present day. Furthermore in the English case for the first 150 years of improvement from 1700 Richard Smith and Jim Oeppen have shown that there was little difference between the rates of longevity gain in the broad mass of the English population and the British aristocracy, suggesting that it was driven not so much by rising per capita wealth or diet but by epidemiological externalities that were primarily the function of exposure to infectious diseases.

This research using historic data has attracted the attention of government agencies, insurance companies and actuarial scientists since it has enormous implications for our understanding of the future. It exposes the danger of believing that the expectation of life cannot rise much above its current uppermost level. As the so-called 'baby boom' generation (of which Richard is a part) ages longevity trends and their determinants form a central debating point. Whichever school of thought proves to be correct the result will have enormous implications for how societies evolve and manage their health and welfare issues and structure their economies.



**Professor Richard Smith**

Head of Department, Professor of Historical Geography and Demography and Fellow of Downing College

To find out more about Richard go to:  
[www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/smith/](http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/smith/)



## Recent careers talk By Peter Williams



We had a very positive response to the notice in the first edition of Landmark asking whether any alumni would be willing to come and give careers talks to the current undergraduates. From the many offers we received, we invited Peter Williams, from the Housing Department of Newham in East London, to talk about careers in urban regeneration. His talk, "From Cambridge Geography to the Olympics" provided much stimulating information on career opportunities and advice for students thinking of dissertations on this topic. We intend to organise more such talks for 2008-09.

## Current Postgraduate Research

### Cool, Creative and Complex: Exploring gender and social networks in London

By Karenjit Clare

My research has been looking at gender divisions and social networks within the creative industry sector, using the advertising industry as my case study. Following on the work of Dr Mia Gray in this department, I am interested in the social, cultural and organisational dynamics of work, particularly through the lens of gender.

Recent research has highlighted that men and women traditionally have had different experiences in the labour market. It was reported in the Financial Times (January 2007) that women remain 'under-represented' in executive positions and are struggling to close the gender gaps in positions of power'. The question that remains is why is this still the case when research has revealed that companies with the highest proportion of female directors are more profitable and efficient. Within advertising, only 15% of senior positions (e.g. MD, CEO) are held by women, which is fairly low. My research explores the reasons for this under-representation. In order to do this, I interviewed people at multiple levels, including CEOs, MDs and more junior workers to explore

recruitment and promotion and the importance of social networks within the advertising industry in London and how these might vary for men and women.

There is increasing evidence that in the UK, USA and the rest of the Western Europe, more women/ girls are now successful in obtaining educational and professional qualifications and so have been able to gain access to many professions, including law and medicine and into highly paid employment in the financial services sector. However, it is less clear Professor Linda McDowell notes (a former lecturer in the Geography Department) 'whether these patterns of relative success are paralleled in newer occupational categories, for example in the creative and cultural industries that are important in a city such as London'. For this reason, my research explores men and women's experiences of working in the new economy, particularly in the creative industry sector.

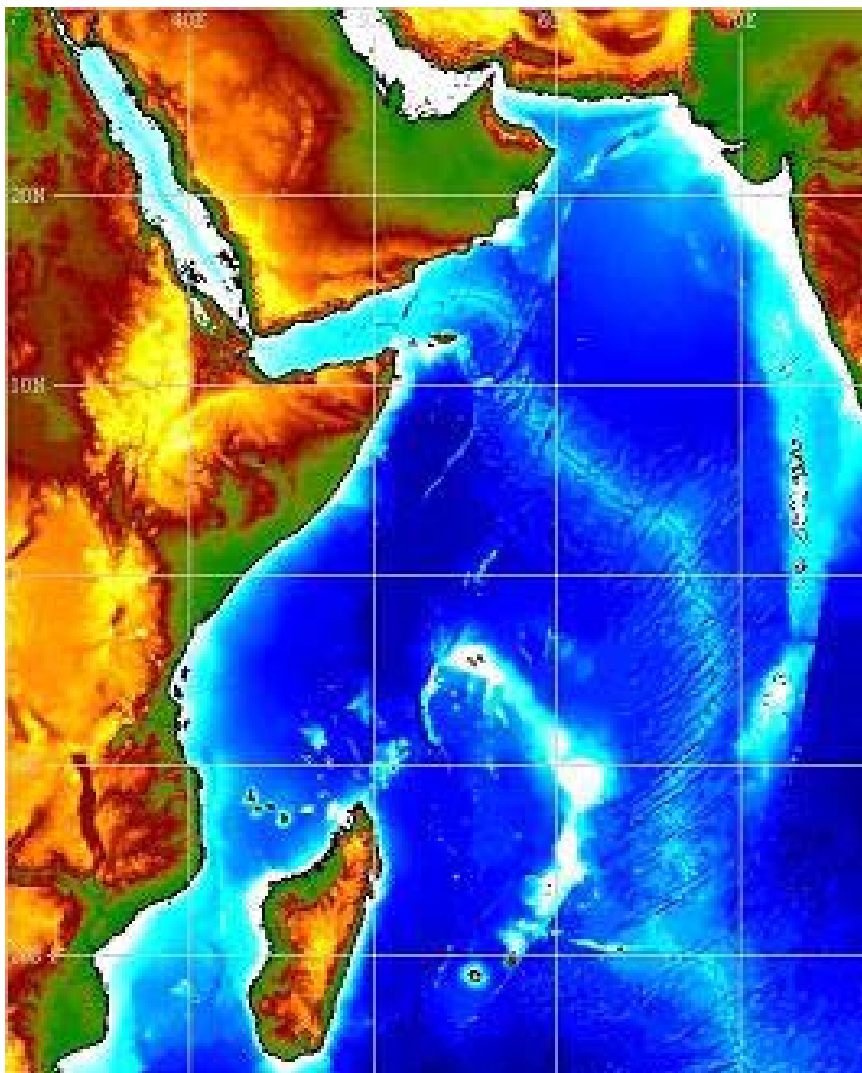


The Harvard Business Review recently published a paper entitled 'The People Who Make Organisations Go- or Stop' – which stated that 'the real work in most companies is done informally through personal contacts' because informal connections are important for acquiring information, support, advice and resources. So, whilst conventional wisdom tells us who you know is as important as what you know, specifying exactly how social networks confer advantages, and documenting what those advantages are, will help us understand how critical social relationships are within the new economy. On the basis of my findings, I suggest that different types of networks may provide alternative routes to similar career resources for men and women.



**Karenjit Clare:** My Research focuses on social networks and gender within creative industries.

To find out more about Karenjit go to:  
[www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/clare/](http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/clare/)



## The Amiranti Ridge

By Sarah Hamylton

Interested in the application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS) to environmental management problems, with reference to tropical marine ecosystems



The Seychelles islands are renowned for white beaches, clear blue seas and uncomplicated indulgence, our fieldtrip to Alphonse atoll was just that experience! In September 2007, I was invited to spend six days on an atoll that had spent as many months on my computer screen in Cambridge. Needless to say, I jumped at the

chance! Our task was to ground reference one of a series of 12 habitat maps of islands along the Amiranti ridge in the West Indian Ocean, produced by the Geography Department's Coastal Research Unit and Unit for Landscape Modelling. Airborne remote sensing surveys had been carried out over each island for the production of digital habitat maps, a basis for modelling the shallow water community dynamics.

Despite staying in a resort closely resembling utopia, our team had a "to do" list so long that it weighed on my mind. Relaxation was replaced by a sort of sixth sense, a constant alertness to ways in which our surroundings could be recorded and analysed. An unrelenting voice in my head asked "What are the processes at work here? How can they be quantified? Where do they sit among my existing body of knowledge? Why can't I forget this and sunbathe by the pool?!" Like most tourists, my experience was one of indulgence, but my cocktail was a blend of underwater adventure, physical exertion, intellectual stimulation and the satisfaction of achievement at the end of the day. To give you an idea of the flavour, I will describe one of our days in the field. Woken for breakfast at 6.30am, we jumped onto our bicycles (ideal transport on a flat atoll!) and cycled to the staff kitchen for bread rolls and a cup of tea. Following a discussion our boat skipper, we decided to make the most of the flat calm sea to survey the southeast point of the atoll, where the trade winds usually blew a prohibitive gale. After bundling an assortment of bathymetric sounders, underwater cameras, measuring tapes and dive kit into the boat, we motored towards the lagoon channel, using a GPS to guide us to our survey site. Crossing the ominous Canal Du Mort, the fins of a pod of Bottleneck dolphins broke the surface of the water next to our boat. We spared a few minutes to jump in and photograph the pod, which made a surprised getaway upon our appearance. At our survey site, we kitted up and descended to the spur and groove coral formations. With photo records of community transects and profiles of the reef topography, we jumped back into the boat and motored in the direction of the resort. Taking advantage of the calm conditions, we took in a quick snorkel survey of the southeast atoll face, which ended uncomfortably near

the wave breaker zone! Finning back to the boat, the swell failed to curb my excitement at having collected bathymetric profiles from a highly desirable, yet virtually forbidden, area. Returning through the lagoon, we took GPS positions of a few patch reefs, to cross reference back to the map and headed in to refill our cylinders before lunch. The afternoon was spent carrying out topographic surveys of the substantial reef flat. This consisted of wading through knee deep water to measure vertical profile changes associated with the various seagrass, rubble and sand zones. We were certainly pleased to see the boat coming to collect us once finished, with the rising tide and numerous rays swimming close to see what all the fuss was about. Once back, there was just enough time to help Lindy, the head of the Island Conservation Society overlay the locations of her much loved Wagtail Shearwater nests onto the our digital map before dinner. Afterwards, remaining energy stocks allowed us to cycle out to these nests and pay the comical flightless birds a visit, before returning to enter the days data and collapse, exhausted but happy!



**Sarah Hamylton** My interest in the application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS) to environmental management problems, with reference to tropical marine ecosystems.

To find out more about Sarah go to:  
[www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/hamylton/](http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/people/hamylton/)



# Heart of the Sahara



By John Pilkington

Explorer, lecturer,  
photographer,  
author and broad-  
caster  
Trinity Hall,  
1968–1971

John made an unusual career switch at the age of 40, giving up his job as a town planner to write, photograph and make radio programmes about some of the remotest parts of the world. After many expeditions in Asia and South America, he found himself recently on a strange quest in the southern Sahara.

I've always been fascinated by deserts, so when I heard that camel caravans still make the 700-kilometre journey from Mali's Taoudenni salt mines to Timbuktu, I decided to try and join one. What I found was the stuff of dreams. Every week between November and February, caravans of up to 50 camels leave Timbuktu for the month-long round trip. On the return journey each camel is loaded with four huge slabs of salt – the so-called 'white gold' of the Sahara. Five hundred years ago Saharan salt was literally worth its weight in gold, so the deposits at Taoudenni must have been quite a find. In Timbuktu I started looking for a guide and camels. This proved surprisingly easy (Timbuktu is that sort of place), and I soon signed up with U Batna Ould Shehr, a Moor who knew the desert inside out and was the proud owner of three good-looking beasts. Our days soon settled into a rhythm. At 5 am I'd awake to find U Batna kneeling towards Mecca, deep in prayer. Three glasses of ridiculously sweet tea, then we'd saddle up the camels and be on our way. He spoke only Arabic, of which I knew very little, but as the trip progressed he taught me the words he needed to say to me, like 'camel', 'sand', 'rice', 'tea' and 'keep walking'. The going was exhausting, but by a combination of walking and riding we kept up a good pace. At midday we'd stop for rice and more tea; then carry on until sunset. There was no road – travellers to Taoudenni take routes of their own choosing.

After three weeks we reached the salt mines and I stared aghast at the conditions there. There were no streets, no houses, no electricity, no fresh water; not even any cooking fuel apart from camel dung. Daytime temperatures reach 30°C in winter and more than 50°C in summer. The 100 or so miners survive on a diet of rice and millet, supplemented by camel meat when a caravan offers them a sick or weak animal for slaughter. To slake their thirst they can choose between drinking the brackish contents of local wells or paying a premium price for decent water to be

brought in. It's truly a posting from Hell. Salt has been mined in the Sahara since at least the 4th Century, but the deposits at Taoudenni were only discovered in the 1500s. They come from an ancient time of higher rainfall when there was a lake in the Taoudenni basin, and having no outlet its water got steadily saltier until after many centuries it turned into a pan of solid salt. Later this became covered by mud and gravel, so the salt seams today lie some four metres below the flat surface of the basin. Working in teams of three or four, the miners dig pits down to this level, then cut horizontal galleries in which they hack out the salt using crude hand-made axes.

On the return journey I fell in with a salt caravan and found out just how tough desert life can be. The two camel-drivers and thirty camels were up before dawn and carried on well after dark, covering up to 50 kilometres a day compared with perhaps 30 when I'd been with U Batna. Once under way the caravan didn't stop. We even brewed tea on the hoof, using portable braziers which the camel-drivers swung in the breeze as they strode along. At night we cooked rice together on camel-dung campfires, and slept under the stars.



From Timbuktu the salt is shipped up the River Niger to the port of Mopti, where Moorish traders sell it on to people from a wide swathe of West Africa. I joined one of the longboats, known as pinasses, and as we tied up on the crowded Mopti waterfront I wondered about the future of the salt caravans. Lorries are making an appearance in the desert, but camels have the edge in that they don't consume expensive diesel fuel, so as long as there's a demand for salt there'll always be a role for the camels. But will U Batna's sons and grandsons want to spend their lives coaxing these cantankerous creatures across one of the most gruelling deserts on earth? Somehow I doubt it.



John Pilkington

For details of John's books and  
multimedia talks visit  
[www.pilk.net](http://www.pilk.net)

# What Do Geographers Do After They Graduate?

Anthony Keogh 1951 - 1954

I welcome this opportunity to express my appreciation – and indeed gratitude – for what I gained from my three-year course in 1951 to 54. I might mention that I am a Religious Brother in a teaching order and had already taught for five years and followed a teacher-training course before coming up at the age of 27. I am afraid my contemporaries, if they remember me at all will only recall a dog-collared rather uncommunicative character, which was not me at all! (We were not encouraged to socialise in those days lest we should be tainted! Things are very different now.)

My supervisor was J H Paterson. He was very good as a supervisor and one of the best of the lecturers, his speciality being North America. Years later I suggested to the Liverpool branch of the Geographical Association that he be invited to give us a lecture. I forget the subject but it was an excellent presentation and I had the privilege of giving the vote of thanks.

Of the lecturers I remember there was Professor Steers on physical geography, especially coastal Britain. He was reputed to have walked the whole coastline of England – or was it Britain? W W Williams was good on cartography and surveying; Bruce Sparks, C T Smith, B H Farmer, and W V Lewis “did” physical; Jean Mitchell and Harriet Wanklyn, the Prof’s wife “did” historical and human geography. Other names were A T Grove and W G V Balchin. There was little in the way of fieldwork, though many generations of First Years must have delved into the Gog Magogs looking for fossils and faint memories return of a visit to Wicken Fen. Practical work in surveying was interesting, though to speak of plane-tableing, chaining and compass-traversing sounds antediluvian in these days of satellite mapping. Miss Mitchell led a very interesting “excursion” (more like a picnic because for some reason it was after the exams) around the “wool churches” of East Anglia. I still have photos taken then. A “fieldwork” of sorts but not academic took the form of assistance in filling breaches in the dykes of the Fenlands in the floods of 1952. Many students volunteered and I can assure you it was hard work; there was not a sound on the returning coaches. I was invited to join a group too do some meteorological fieldwork in the Cairngorms but unfortunately was unable to go.

Another outing of a non-academic nature was a hockey match against our opposite department in Oxford. The team consisted of hockey, soccer and rugby players of both sexes. I don’t remember who won but it was a bit of fun. My achievement of a 2ii proved to be a good preparation for life of geography teaching in grammar schools, and twenty two years lecturing in a teacher-training college, which eventually became a college of Higher Education. I would hope I passed on to pupils and students some appreciation and understanding of the physical and human world around them besides helping them to pass their exams.

PS As those who attended will remember with pleasure, there was a Jubilee gathering at Girton in 2004 of a number of the Geography Department’s graduates of 1954. it proved to be a very enjoyable occasion.

In our previous issue (1) we featured David Wright in our section ‘What Do Geographers Do After They Graduate?’

We are pleased to announce the further news that David R Wright received the Ness Award 2008 from the Royal Geographical Society for ‘the popularisation of geography among young people’. Further information, and a list of past recipients, may be seen at [www.rgs.org](http://www.rgs.org)

‘Philip’s Children’s Atlas’ by David & Jill Wright bears the RGS logo and has sold over a million copies worldwide - and David has written many other books and articles to enthuse children and teachers.



Barry Floyd  
1943/1947-1949

I first came up to Cambridge (Gonville & Caius College) from London in 1943, courtesy of the RAF. For six months we had lectures in the Geography Department in the mornings and military training with the University Air Squadron in the afternoons. This was a life-changing experience for me, having left school at 16 and begun work as a trainee cost accountant in a Ponders End factory. I hope the following commentary will reveal how much I owe to the Department for opening up a wonderfully satisfying career.

After aircrew training as a navigator in South Africa, and operational experiences with Bomber Command in the Middle and Far East – with the rank of F/Lt – I was able to return to Cambridge in 1947 to complete an Honours BA degree in Geography (upper second) in 1949. Clearly the instruction in map-reading and map projections in the Department was of great help to my future navigational training. But lectures in physical geography (geomorphology) were also useful in helping to identify terrain patterns from the air. I also enjoyed classes featuring meteorology and climatology, historical geography and African studies. My post-Cambridge career involved graduate studies in the USA with a Fulbright Scholarship and introduction to Isaiah Bowman at Johns Hopkins University, thanks to Professor Debenham. I later undertook fieldwork in Southern Rhodesia for a PhD from Syracuse University and, henceforth specialised in African studies, with particular focus upon rural land use in the tropics. An American wife and five children were to accompany me on a subsequent, somewhat nomadic, academic life-style! I was appointed acting head of the Geography Department at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1962, but obliged to leave the country in 1966 on the eve of the Biafran War. From 1966 to 1972 I was head of the Geography Department at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica. My first British post was with the Department of Geography, University of Durham, 1972-84. On a leave of absence, I was able to return to West Africa to become Head of the Department of Geography & Regional Planning, and dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, at the University of Calabar, 1978-82.

On retirement from university life, I have spent much of the last 23 years in Malaysia, where my wife served as an English-language specialist for a programme, which brought several thousand Malaysian students to study at universities in the UK. For a while I served as Director of the Centre for British teachers, prior to making an aerial photo study of market gardening around Kuala Lumpur, attached to the Department of Geography, at the University of Malaya.

Now in old age and back in East Sussex, my hobby is stamp collecting and I enjoy writing books and articles on philately – as much, if not more so – than previously producing so-called learned papers and publications in Geography, trying to impress one’s superiors!

Heartfelt thanks again to the Cambridge geographers of an earlier generation for providing such inspiration and guidance towards an academic career for a working class lad.



## Our Website

[www.geog.cam.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/alumni)



# ALUMNI WEEKEND

26th – 28th September 2008

For the first time in over 25 years, the Department of Geography is taking part in the annual University Alumni Weekend.

We have arranged for various events to take place in our department on Friday 26th September including tours of the library and laboratories (details below) and an exhibition in the small lecture theatre of current research being carried out by our graduate students. We hope very much that you will be able to come by and visit the department. For the tours you will need to book through the Development Office but if you have any queries about the exhibition or the events themselves, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at [alumni@geog.cam.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@geog.cam.ac.uk)

## DEPARTMENT TALKS

### Friday 26th September

Our Department Alumni Event will start with talks from two of our lecturers – one in physical geography and the other in human geography. *All welcome.*



#### 'Is Britain an Island?'

12pm in the Large Lecture Theatre  
Professor Phil Gibbard



#### "The historical and contemporary human Geography of ageing populations"

1pm in the Large Lecture Theatre  
Professor Richard Smith

*Following our department talks please feel free to go to the Small Lecture Theatre for our Department Exhibition and await to be taken on Department Tours of the Library and Labs (the tours must be booked via the Development Office).*

## DEPARTMENT TOURS

### Friday 26th September

2.00pm – 2.30pm, repeated at 2.30pm and 3.30pm

#### The Department of Geography Laboratory

*The Physical Geography Laboratories are located in both the Sir William Hardy Building and the main Department. In the main building, they comprise of: Physical Laboratories (including the Soils and Sediment Laboratory, Preparation Rooms, Microscope Rooms and Malvern Room) The Chemistry Laboratories which comprise of: Analytical Laboratories and Instrument Room.*



**Tour Leader Dr Steve Boreham, Laboratory Manager**  
Venue Small Lecture Theatre,  
Department of Geography  
Capacity 8

*Please meet at the Small Lecture Theatre for the start of the tour.*

2.30pm – 3.00pm, repeated at 3.30pm

#### The Department of Geography Library

*The Library is one of the largest geography libraries in the country. It contains 30-40,000 books, periodical volumes, offprints, reports, and pamphlets.*



**Tour Leader Mr Robert Carter, Librarian**  
Venue Small Lecture Theatre,  
Department of Geography

Capacity 15

*Please meet at the Small Lecture Theatre for the start of the tour.*

To book for the tours please contact: Tel: 01223 332288

or email: [alumni@foundation.cam.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@foundation.cam.ac.uk)

## DEPARTMENT EXHIBITION

### Friday 26th September

2.00pm – 4.00pm

#### Exhibition: Department of Geography

*Come along and meet academic staff and students from the Department, who will be presenting posters on their latest research.*

*Venue Small Lecture Theatre, Department of Geography*

*There is disabled access to the Small Lecture Theatre and the laboratory, but not to the Library on the upper floor.*

*No need to book.*

## DEPARTMENT LECTURE

### Saturday 27th September

11.15am – 12.15pm

Sidgwick Site

#### The Political Ecology of Conservation

Professor Bill Adams

*Human impact on the biosphere has increased in scale and intensity, and the conservation of biodiversity is now accepted as one of the critical human challenges of the 21st century.*

*Some of the most intractable issues faced by conservationists are political, both in terms of the causes of biodiversity loss and the impacts of conservation actions themselves.*



**Bill Adams** is Moran Professor of Conservation and Development. He has taught in the Department of Geography since 1984, and is a Fellow of Downing College.

To book for Professor Adams lecture

please contact: Tel: 01223 332288

or email: [alumni@foundation.cam.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@foundation.cam.ac.uk)



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