

AUTUMN 2024

HGRG NEWSLETTER

RGS-IBG Historical Geography Research Group



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

CHERYL MCGEACHAN

Dear HGRG,

Welcome to the latest edition of the newsletter and to everyone who has just joined the Group and the Committee. I am writing this in the last few days of the summer and it feels as though it has been a quick year so far with lots of exciting activities taking place across the group and wider community. There have been a number of highlights that will be detailed throughout this newsletter, including our support of postgraduate scholars through our conference fund scheme, our dissertation prize winners, the relaunch of this newsletter, and the ongoing success of New and Emerging Research Session that has just taken place at the RGS-IBG Conference. Congratulations to everyone who has taken part and been awarded in these areas. A key highlight has been the celebration of the group's 50th birthday – Happy Birthday HGRG! – and the celebrations culminated in a two-day Practising Historical Geography event that took place at the University of Nottingham in November 2023. The event was the group's first hybrid event and was designed to be a space to come together, to reflect, and to look forwards towards the future of historical geography. It was a wonderful opportunity to



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[X:@HGRG_RGS](https://twitter.com/HGRG_RGS)



reconnect with old friends and new, and a range of speakers from across the community shared their experiences of working with collections, winning the HGRG Dissertation Prize, undertaking historical work in contemporary times, and reflecting on the influence of the research group to their own career trajectory. We are indebted to the support from the School of Geography at the University of Nottingham for being such generous hosts and for offering such a warm and welcoming space to hold this important event.



(c) Cheryl McGeachan

The Group continues to reflect upon the future of the HGRG and have been considering ways to increase membership, reach and access to the group and its resources, particularly in relation to funding. I would like to thank Dr Philip Jagessar (Communications Officer) for all his hard work improving our website which is a key connection tool for the group. We would welcome suggestions from readers regarding our website and access to membership to help us to strengthen our advertising of the group and its activities.

The committee is very excited about the forthcoming 18th International Conference for Historical Geography (ICHG) taking place in Shanghai next year. We hope many people from the HGRG community will support this event. To assist with attendance and participation at the conference, the HGRG has recently advertised the **HGRG-ICHG Bursary Scheme** to support scholars' attendance at the ICHG. Applications close on the

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7th October 2024 and we would encourage all eligible scholars to apply (see also p.4) . We would also welcome suggestions from readers regarding potential activities that could align with the ICHG so please do get in touch to share any thoughts and ideas.

We would also like to remind all members that we have a number of funding schemes available on hgrg.org.uk. The page also includes information about our Postgraduate Support Scheme, Small Conference and Seminar Funding, and Undergraduate Dissertation Prize. The deadlines for the first two schemes are **1st April, 1st August, and 1st December** in any year, so postgraduate readers might like to consider making an application for the next round. The Group are also keen to support conferences dedicated to the advancement of historical geography and supporting the profile and careers of postgraduate and early-career historical geographers. Applicants should be members of the HGRG and application forms can be found on the website.

I would like to say a huge note of thanks to all committee members who have worked so hard across the year to keep the group active and to generate new exciting opportunities. I would like to say a particular thank you to Dr Joanne Norcup who has been a key member of the committee over many years and has brought so much care and inspiration to the HGRG, running the annual writing retreat and hosting online support for our early career community across the pandemic. Jo will be terribly missed by everyone as she takes a break, and we very much hope that she will be able to rejoin the committee in the future. I would like to welcome Dr Patricia Silveira as the new Chair of the Committee. Patricia is a longstanding committee member and has wonderfully strengthened the HGRG in many ways, including creating important international connections. I wish Patricia so much luck in her new role. I would also like to welcome Dr Rachel Hunt who is taking over as Secretary and Xin Yang who is joining the group as Postgraduate Rep.

Finally, this is my last newsletter as Chair of the HGRG and I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to

HGRG Committee

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everyone that I have met and worked with across my time on the committee. The HGRG is a special community that has offered me a great deal of care, laughter, support and cake, even when academia has felt a lonely place to be. I am so very proud of the HGRG and am very grateful to have been a small part of its journey. I will miss committee life but I am very much looking forward to remaining part of the community and seeing the HGRG grow and flourish.

Take care everyone and best wishes,

Cheryl



HGRG Committee

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NEWS

ICHG CONFERENCE

The 18th International Conference of Historical Geographers will take place at the Institute of Chinese Historical Geography, Fudan University, Shanghai, on 14-18 July 2025. Under the theme of “Historical Geographies for a Diverse and Sustainable Planet”, the ICHG 2025 will bring together historical geographers from across the world to share insights into the latest research achievements and discipline development in the field. The conference will welcome all scholars to exchange ideas, share experiences, and promote the development of historical geography. See p.13 of this newsletter for the call for papers which has a deadline of **30 September 2024**.

See: <https://ichg2025fudan.casconf.cn/> for more details of the conference.

HGRG BURSARIES FOR ICHG

The HGRG Committee recently announced the continuation of its bursary grant fund to support scholars' attendance at the ICHG. Grants up to a maximum of £1,500 will be available to successful applicants. The award can be used to cover conference fees, travel, accommodation and subsistence. To find out more and complete the application form go to <https://hgrg.org.uk/ichg/>. The deadline for submitting the application is **7 October** so don't delay!

RESEARCH SERIES SUBMISSIONS

Contributions to the *Historical Geography Research Series* are always welcome. In addition to single or jointly-authored essays or monographs, we welcome themed conference papers or papers on a topic of research relevant to the broad interests of the HGRG. Contact the Editor Ivan Markovic for more details and see <https://hgrg.org.uk/research-series/> where you can download previous publications in the series (see also p.6).

PRACTISING HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

The annual HGRG Practising Historical Geography conference will take place in November 2024 with a date still to be announced. Keep your eyes peeled on email and social media (@HGRG_RGS) for further details and make sure to book your place once its announced. Please share details of the event with as many students and colleagues as you can.



(c) Cheryl McGeachan



NEWS

HGRG DISSERTATION PRIZE WINNER

The submissions for this year's undergraduate dissertation prize were 'outstanding' and 'the diversity of topics was wonderful' making the choice of winner very difficult. We're very pleased to announce therefore that the winner of the HGRG's Undergraduate Dissertation Prize for 2024 is **Lola Francis** (University of Oxford) for the dissertation 'Seeking Fairies: Witches, Women, and Nature in Early Modern Scotland'. The panel were impressed with the high levels of creativity involved in this dissertation. The project used a critical and conceptually rich theoretical approach and applied this to a fascinating topic. The methodological approach was also both novel and insightful, and analysed difficult-to-source archival materials in a highly innovative manner, allowing the topic to be explored in new ways. A captivating writing style was used throughout and there was a genuine sense of personal investment in the work which elevated the dissertation further.

Lola will receive £200 worth of Routledge books, courtesy of The Routledge Research in Historical Geography book series, which sponsors the prize, and will be invited to submit an article based on the dissertation for publication in the *Journal of Historical Geography*.

Grace Vincent from the University of Hull was highly commended for her dissertation 'Lesbian identity in urban space'. The panel said: 'The project brought together an insightful conceptual approach and applied this to a particularly fascinating case study. The project not only pushed the boundaries of historical geographical study in new directions, but also meant that a range of historically marginalised experiences were brought to light for analysis and discussion.'

Did you know?

Two maps from a collection of 29 have recently gone on display in the RGS Map Room with new interpretation. These maps of Burma (Myanmar) were made by Indigenous peoples or based upon local knowledge of trade routes and geography in what is today the border region between Myanmar and Thailand.

These maps were used by Dr Joy Slappnig in her 2022 thesis, where she argued that they can be read as 'material embodiments of colonial encounters and also as traces of the agency of indigenous peoples involved in their creation, making them significant artefacts in colonial-era map collections.'

Dr Slappnig's thesis (*The Indigenous map: native information, ethnographic object, artefact of encounter*) was completed jointly with the Society and Royal Holloway, University of London, and is one of several doctoral dissertations the Society has supported with funding from the AHRC. Such research, and the research of the hundreds of scholars who access the Society's library and archives each year, allow a continual reassessment of the potential of the Collections to tell stories about a wider variety of audiences and to better serve diverse communities.

See: <https://www.rgs.org/our-collections/stories-from-our-collections/explore-our-collections/burma-indigenous-maps>

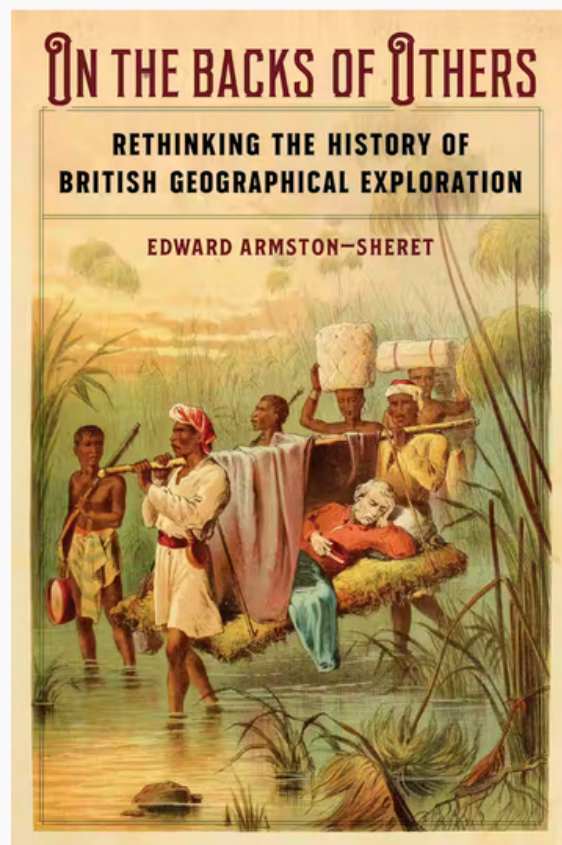


NEWS

NEW BOOK ALERT

A new publication from historical and cultural geographer Ed Armston-Sheret has recently been announced. Entitled *On the Backs of Others: Rethinking the History of British Geographical Exploration*, this new 330-page hardback book offers new perspectives on British exploration in the nineteenth century by focusing on the contributions of the people and animals, ordinarily written out of mainstream histories, who made these journeys possible.

Published by the University of Nebraska Press on 1 December 2024, this new book is available from the publisher's website, where if you sign up to pre-order you can receive a 30% discount off the RRP: For further details go online to: <https://www.combinedacademic.co.uk/notify-me-when-available-to-pre-order-on-the-backs-of-others/>



NEW CHINESE TRANSLATIONS

Number 46 (2019) of the HGRG's *Historical Geography Research Series* [Alan R H Baker, Iain S Black and Robin A Butlin *130 Years of Historical Geography at Cambridge 1888-2018*] is scheduled for publication in Chinese by the Commercial Press, Shanghai, in November 2024.

Arrangements are also being made for Chinese translations to be published by Fudan University, Shanghai, and Southwest University, Chongqing, of the following three papers: Alan R. H. Baker, Robin A. Butlin, A. D. M. Phillips and Hugh C. Prince 'The future of the past' *Area* 1, no. 4 (1969) 46-51; Alan R H Baker 'Maps, models and Marxism : methodological mutation in British historical geography': *L'Espace géographique* 14, no. 1 (1985), 9-15; Alan R H Baker 'Historical geography as an international discipline 1975-2015' *Geographical Journal* 182, no. 3 (2016), 276-283.



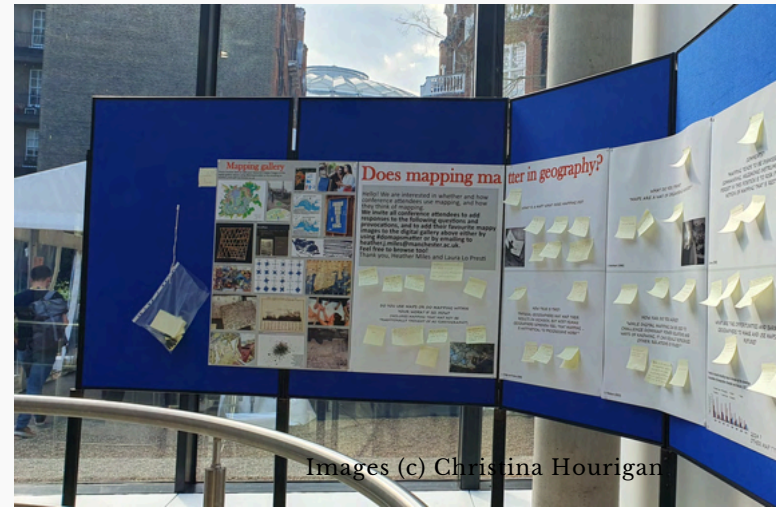
RGS-IBG 2024 CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

BY BETH WILLIAMSON

The theme of the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2024, 'Mapping,' as set by Chair Stephen Legg, provided a valuable opportunity to explore the diverse ways in which geographers and scholars from various disciplines use maps in their research. Given the limited focus on mapping in university curricula, it was particularly insightful from a postgraduate perspective to see how maps are utilised to effectively disseminate research findings. This theme encouraged us not only to consider what a map reveals but also to delve deeper, asking critical questions about how the map communicates its message and the decisions made by the mapmaker during its creation. Organising the 'New and Emerging Research in Historical Geography' session at the conference for the past two years has been a privilege and remains a highlight of the event for me. This year, we were fortunate to have three postgraduate students presenting their research. Xin Yang examined the application of historical geography archival methods within the Chinese context. Hannah Campbell Hewson provided a critical reflection on the use of cartobibliographies, demonstrating how this methodology can yield valuable insights into maps and their creators. Lastly, Yiming Xu presented a series of maps employed by Japanese colonists in Changchun, illustrating how colonial cartographers used selective representation to shape the city's development. Each presenter delivered an engaging talk, sparking brilliant discussions thanks to an inquisitive and engaged audience. It was inspiring to see the innovative work being undertaken by our postgraduate



(c) Christina Hourigan



Images (c) Christina Hourigan

community, and we look forward to following their progress throughout their PhDs. I also had the opportunity to participate in the Chair's Map Room Conversations at the Foyle Reading Room. Alongside Philip Jagessar, I spoke on the theme of 'Mapping Language.' While Philip explored language maps of India and Africa, I focused on two maps of Persia to illustrate how the Royal Geographical Society's system of orthography was used to record Persian place names for English speakers. After introducing our maps and giving attendees time to examine them, we engaged in many thought-provoking discussions. These conversations encouraged us to reflect more deeply on how we interpret maps and what insights they offer into the process of their creation.

It was wonderful to see so many sessions sponsored by the HGRG at the conference, and I had the opportunity to attend several, including 'Reimagining Early Thematic Mapping,' where presenters showcased their work on various thematic maps, and 'Historical Geographies of the Caribbean, a panel session where discussants shared their contributions to the field. In the *Journal of Historical Geography* session, Matthew Edney explored historical geography's past engagement with maps and urged us to consider how contemporary historical geographers can interpret maps and focus on the mapping process to uncover spatial narratives.

After another highly productive and insightful RGS-IBG conference, I am left with a range of new ideas on how to engage with maps in fresh and innovative ways. The experience has inspired me to explore different approaches to mapping that I hadn't previously considered.

Did you lead, speak or attend a HGRG-sponsored session at the conference? Be sure to share your experiences and photos on social media and tag @HGRG_RGS and #RBGIBG2024 and spread the word about HGRG.



To start us off we're featuring Christina Hourigan's PhD research in the archives at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Christina says: 'I'm currently researching the cultural history of the deodar cedar at Kew Gardens as one element of my PhD - which is entitled 'The Global Arboretum'. The archives and 'Kewensia' collection at Kew are such a varied and fantastic resource and I've found so many materials - from correspondence to government memos, photos and maps - about how the cedars came to Kew from India, were first planted there and what they represented. However, there are also some stories I've unearthed about plans that didn't happen, including a folder of 19th century memos and letters regarding a government request for two acres of Kew's land on which to grow cedars for the Royal Navy. A scheme which the then director dismissed as "humbug"! This particular folder was a complete delight to look through as you could really hear the voices of the people involved in discussing this plan.'

with 60/3 514.
New. Pleasure Grounds.
The Right Honorable
J. F. Kennedy
requesting that a portion of the
Royal Gardens at Kew, may be set
apart for the raising, under the
direction of Sir W. Hooker, of plants
from the seed of the Cedrus—
Deodara. —
27th January 1863.

I hope this to Sir William
Hooker, requesting him to
state, 1. whether he has any
ground that could be affd?
to the purpose of raising these
plants; and 2. whether
when raised, they will be of
any use to the ^{country} as having a
T. J. P.
J. F. Kennedy
J. F.

You can find out more about access to Kew's Library and Archives by going to:
<https://www.kew.org/science/collections-and-resources/collections>

Send your image and approx 50 words to our newsletter editor by early January to be included in the next newsletter.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chartered Geographer Hilary Bishop receives a Fulbright Award to the US

Dr Hilary Bishop, a faculty member from Liverpool John Moores University has received a Fulbright All-Disciplines Scholars Award to enable her to research at host institution Glucksman Ireland House, New York University, on one of the most well-regarded and impactful scholarship programmes in the world.

As a participant, Hilary has been selected from a strong applicant pool to research how Irish living heritage can be measured and managed using a values-based approach that goes beyond obvious success indicators such as visitor numbers, social media likes, and income from tourism.

Commenting on receiving the Award, Hilary said: “Upon learning I had received the Award I felt very humbled that I had been given such an amazing opportunity to go and research in New York. I am really looking forward to integrating myself into the Irish community there and to enjoying all the culture that the city has to offer. As a Fulbright scholar, I will be working alongside Irish and Irish Americans to record aspects of their living heritage in order to create a multi-layered representation of landscape known as a deep map. Rather than presenting a fixed view of a place, the deep map will invite users to visually explore the cultural history and heritage of the Irish landscape and develop new ways of thinking about place. I hope this research will enable me to support future policymaking in respect to living heritage within the UK, Ireland and the USA.”

Hilary will be based at Glucksman Ireland House, New York University (see: <https://as.nyu.edu/research-centers/irelandhouse.html>), where she will be working with Irish and Irish Americans to record their narratives in relation to the living heritage associated with Ireland’s Mass paths. Mass paths are an intimate part of the Irish landscape and provide a tangible link to Irish history and heritage, yet they have no official definition, status or protection. Many are being lost due to house building, infrastructure projects or changing farming practices. Hilary aims to find new innovative ways of measuring and managing living heritage that can support future policy making and better support these historic pathways.



Hilary has secured a reputation as a leading practitioner in her field, recognised through Chartered Geographer status awarded by the Royal Geographical Society and she is also listed on the directory of experts of the British Association of Irish Studies. Her research into Catholic Mass sites and Mass paths in Ireland has provided one of the most comprehensive and multidimensional critical analyses of their significance in the retention of Catholic identity. Bishop is most proud of her public website www.findamassrock.com which provides a free community resource and lists many of the Mass sites she has visited and researched. She is most excited about the opportunities that the Fulbright offers to immerse herself in the culture that New York has to offer and plans to make an initial beeline to Central Park which was modelled on a park in Birkenhead where she was born.

The US-UK Fulbright Commission works to advance knowledge, promote civic engagement and develop compassionate leaders through education exchange between the peoples of the US and the UK. It is the only academic awards programme that operates on both sides of the Atlantic, providing grants for postgraduate study, research and teaching. Since 1948, tens of thousands of British and American citizens have participated in the programme, enriching their educations, developing relationships, advancing their careers and making a difference in their communities, at home and abroad. The Fulbright Program of awards is now considered amongst the most prestigious scholarship awards globally, with 60 Nobel Laureates and 39 Heads of State/Government within its 390,000 global alumni.

Maria Balinska, Executive Director of the US-UK Fulbright Commission said: “Our vision is a world where there are no obstacles to learning, understanding and collaboration. Today there are many global challenges to overcome, and the world needs compassionate leaders to tackle them. Our cohort of awardees will be placing cultural engagement at the heart of their experiences as they undertake ambitious study and research programmes in the US. I am filled with hope for the wonderful collaborations that will ensue.”



EVENTS

The London Group of Historical Geographers Autumn Seminar Series

gets underway on 8 October with five talks on the theme of **Law and Empire**. To register to attend the seminars, please visit: <https://www.history.ac.uk/seminars/london-group-historical-geographers> on the website of the Institute of Historical Research. All seminars are held on Tuesdays and begin at 17:30.

8 October 2024

Nathan Perl-Rosenthal (University of Southern California)

The art of prize: privateers' legal geographies in the long eighteenth century.

In person (Wolfson Room NB01) and online

22 October 2024

Lisa Ford (UNSW Sydney)

Inquiring into colonial law reform: views from the archives of the Commissions of Inquiry, 1819–1833.

In person (Wolfson Room NB02) and online

5 November 2024

Chloe Ireton (UCL)

Imagining liberty: legal geographies of enslaved and free Black people in late sixteenth-century Sevilla.

In person (Room 243, Senate House) and online

12 November 2024

Joel Wainwright (Ohio State University)

How does the law obtain its space? Justice and racial difference in colonial law: British Honduras (Belize), 1821.

Discussant: Filiberto Penados (Galen University)

Online only via Zoom

3 December 2024

Maïa Pal (Oxford Brookes University)

The law of infrastructure: jurisdictional accumulation and neo-imperialism at British and French undersea cable landing sites.

In person (Wolfson Room NB01) and online

Please subscribe to the LGHG mailing list at <https://lghgseminar.wordpress.com/subscribe/> to keep up-to-date with our activities or take a look at our archive of previous talks.

Website: <https://lghgseminar.wordpress.com/>

Bluesky: @lghgseminar.bsky.social



CALLS FOR PAPERS

The 18th International Conference of Historical Geographers

will take place at the Institute of Chinese Historical Geography, Fudan University, Shanghai, on 14-18 July 2025. Under the theme of “Historical Geographies for a Diverse and Sustainable Planet”, the ICHG 2025 will bring together historical geographers from across the world to share insights into the latest research achievements and discipline development in the field. The conference will welcome all scholars to exchange ideas, share experiences, and promote the development of historical geography.

If you would like to submit a paper, or propose a session the deadline is very soon on **30 September 2024**. Please go online for further details to <https://ichg2025fudan.casconf.cn/> where you find links to complete the relevant application forms. These must be sent to ichg2025@163.com no later than 30 September.

Scholars are invited to submit on the following themes:

1. The impact of climate change on cultural landscape and cultural diversity
2. Environmental archeology and origin of early civilizations
3. The influence of regional migration on economies and cultures
4. Reflections on colonialism and globalization through geographical thought
5. Political geography and geopolitics
6. Historical perspectives on regional economies, land use, and land cover;
7. Urban geographies
8. History of cartography
9. Geographical information science and historical text analysis
10. Historical geography and environmental history
11. Heritage and Historical Geography
12. History of Geographical Knowledge

Registration for the conference will open from the above website on 21 January 2025.