

# Geography

News on Geography and  
Environmental Science at  
Queen Mary University of London



## First years explore a Greater London national park

They may just have arrived at Queen Mary University of London, but freshers in the School of Geography were straight out in the field exploring the capital in a brand new piece of fieldwork designed to research the idea of a 'Greater London national park.'

The 'Reimagine London' project is a collaboration between the School and guerrilla geographer Daniel Raven-Ellison who is campaigning to have London designated a national park. Acting as park rangers, the students visited each of the capital's 33 boroughs in groups and reported back on their findings. Their photos and observations will become an exhibition at City Hall and online.

Professor Catherine Nash has been leading the project. "We wanted to get our new students out in the field as soon as possible to get to know London, get to know each other and to explore ideas and places in lively, imaginative and practical ways," she said. "Their work will contribute to a debate around how people think about, enjoy and take care of this city, as well as help



The Reimagine London project featured in the national press and students were interviewed for London Live TV. Pictured: Daniel Raven-Ellison and students. Picture courtesy of Mark Chilvers, [www.markchilvers.com](http://www.markchilvers.com).

foster those fieldwork skills common to geographers and environmental scientists."

With a population in excess of eight million, the Greater London area covers a space of 1,500 km<sup>2</sup> and includes some 30,000 allotments, 65,000 stands of woodland, 13,000 species of wildlife and an estimated 3.8 million gardens.

"If the Greater London area was to achieve national park status, it would be the first of its kind in the world. The park would transform how we all think about, experience and make our capital in the future," said campaigner Daniel Raven-Ellison,

who is also a National Geographic Emerging Explorer. "It would provide us with a new and common vision of what London is for and in the process, will have the potential to improve our health and prosperity."

The School of Geography is a 'Friend' of the campaign and it is hoped students will develop and contribute to the project throughout their first year at QMUL. Funded by the Westfield Trust, the project's findings will also be part of a one-day workshop to be held in February on the South Bank.

See the students' work at [www.reimagine.london](http://www.reimagine.london)



# Congratulations to the Class of 2014



QMUL geographers and environmental scientists stepped boldly across the stage at Queen Mary's People's Palace earlier in the summer to shake hands and acknowledge their degree success.

Each year, the School of Geography and Queen Mary University of London gives a number of awards in recognition of exceptional academic achievement. In 2014 the recipients were:

- **Max Thompson**, Michael Alexander Jones Memorial Award.
- **Sophie Lyddon**, A.E. Smailes Prize.
- **Anisa Daud**, Roger Lee Prize.
- **Harry Murdoch**, Simon Tavarna Writing Prize.
- **Louise Dell**, Mark Landskroner Prize.
- **Nicholas Blundell** and **Laura Mills** both won a £100 Draper's Company Prize.
- **Sophie Lyddon** and **Elia Maritan** both won a £100 Principal's Prize.

Graduates can keep in touch with the School and let us know how they are getting on. Log in to [www.qmul.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.qmul.ac.uk/alumni) to make sure we have the right contact details for you and connect with us on [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) too.

*Pictured: Graduates Nick Riley, Abi Aldridge, Laura Nott and Bradley Williams.*

# Freshers line up to join new Geography Society

QMUL Geography welcomed a brand new Geography Society this year – and they were swamped with more than 200 would-be members at Freshers' Fair.

The team, led by third year BA Geography student **Thomas Ganly**, is planning a full calendar of events and to involve students across all year groups and as many subjects as possible.

"GeogSoc is here to organise social events so that students can meet new people, make new friends and foster a greater sense of community," Thomas said. "But we're also keen to organise academic events and tap into the wealth of research expertise among the staff and students. We'll invite guest speakers and organise tours as well."

The team has already helped organise a treasure hunt and ceilidh for the



*Geography Society Committee 2014–15 (left to right): Warrick Keats, Bryony Corr, Louise Hughes, Charlotte Lauder, Jacob Moore and President Thomas Ganly.*

School's newest students – but check online for forthcoming events and how to get involved:

- Twitter: [@QMULGeogSoc](https://twitter.com/QMULGeogSoc)
- [www.facebook.com/groups/qmulgeographysociety/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/qmulgeographysociety/)
- Email: [qmulgeog@gmail.com](mailto:qmulgeog@gmail.com)

# New River Lab for QMUL Geography



Dr Alex Henshaw (right) with technician Dr Natalie Ludgate testing out one of the new flumes in the River Lab.

Is river dredging and straightening the answer to saving towns and farmland from flooding like that which hit parts of the UK in the new year? How effective are these and other human-made interventions at mitigating such risk and what knock-on effects do they have on river channel morphology and sediment yields? These and many others are just the sort of questions students will be answering in the new River Lab at the School of Geography.

Two new flumes – a sediment transport demonstration channel and a river simulator – have been added to the School's already industry-leading standard of

research equipment. The flumes will allow the School's geographers and environmental scientists to understand the ways in which changes in the magnitude of river flows can affect not only the movement of materials downstream but the shape and configuration of the bed too. "We can now simulate the natural environment in a lab and give the students an insight into how rivers behave in different circumstances," Dr Alex Henshaw from the School's environmental science team explained.

"Whether a river is deluged during a flood, or flows faster because of human engineering or, indeed,

slower because of a natural change in depth, all of these variables affect the amount of water and sediment that can be moved and students will now be able to model such outcomes in the lab."

The new River Lab offers unparalleled facilities in London for research into understanding the evolution of rivers. Brand new digital camera equipment will capture results in 3D to facilitate digital modelling too.

The teaching space in the labs has been reconfigured for undergraduates to give an even more flexible teaching and practical space for project work. Meanwhile, PhD students have their own dedicated research space.

Thanks to the new facilities a new module called Physical Modelling of Fluvial Processes is available this year to masters students studying Environmental Science: Integrated Management of Freshwater Environments. "The School of Geography at QMUL has a unique collection of expertise in fluvial geomorphology and this new equipment will offer students the chance to develop projects that will reinforce knowledge developed through the programme and provide an excellent grounding for PhD research," Dr Henshaw said.

## QMUL Geography is number 1 in London

The School of Geography is top in London for geography and environmental studies according to the **Guardian University Guide 2015**.

Published at the start of the summer, the guide shows how QMUL's School of Geography has climbed eight places nationally to become the highest-ranked university in the city for these subjects.

Meanwhile, the most recent *Destination of Leavers from Higher Education* survey (2013) showed the School's employability scores climbing to 96 per cent in work or further study six months after graduation; 71 per cent of these at graduate level.

Overall, Queen Mary University of London is now ranked in the top 100 of universities in the world (QS

World University Rankings); that's a climb of more than 50 places in two years.



The Queens' Building at QMUL.

# New Head of School at QMUL Geography

Geography at Queen Mary University of London welcomes **Professor Alison Blunt** as its new Head of School.



A leading expert in human geography, Professor Alison Blunt takes over from Professor Miles Ogborn who led the School through important developments in its curriculum, research and resources.

Professor Blunt joined Queen Mary School of Geography in 1999 and is the co-director for QMUL's Centre for Studies of Home too – a joint research initiative with The Geffrye Museum of the Home. Her research spans geographies of home, empire, migration and diaspora and she co-supervises seven PhD students in these areas in collaboration with The Geffrye, the V&A Museum of Childhood and the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

“Our position as a university in east London has seen us at the very forefront of all the changes that have taken place since the Olympics were announced,” Professor Blunt said. “What makes us distinct as a School of Geography is the way in which we

work not only in the local area and with local people to demonstrate the application of our research and studies in both the community and the environment, but also at the global scale. Our teaching reflects this breadth of expertise, with our students not only working on projects in East London with Citizens UK, but also able to go on field courses to Ireland, India, New Zealand and the United States.”

Professor Blunt completed her MA and PhD at the University of British Columbia in Canada and it was living so far from home that inspired her early work on women and travel. “For me, studies in geography and environmental science are incredibly important because of the way our research investigates both the human and physical worlds. From the scientific processes that shape our landscapes to the human interaction with them, our research allows students to delve into these processes from local to global scales,” she said.

## The School welcomes new staff

**Dr Emily Lines**, lecturer in environmental science, has previously worked at UCL and Cambridge. She is interested in forest ecology, remote sensing and the terrestrial carbon cycle, and computational and statistical techniques for data analysis.



**Dr Louise Slater**, lecturer in physical geography. Louise is a river scientist and is interested in the interactions between hydro-climatology and fluvial geomorphology, and how they modify flood hazards.



**Dr Rob Storrar**, lecturer in physical geography. Rob joins us from Durham University and is a Quaternary scientist who examines the fluctuations of continent-sized ice sheets over millennial timescales.



**Dr Stephen Taylor**, lecturer in human geography. Stephen joins us from the University of Cambridge where his PhD examined the globalisation of clinical trials. His ongoing research explores philanthropy and polio eradication.



[www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/staff/academicstaff/](http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/staff/academicstaff/)

# Fieldwork and fair trade make summer a busy time

From the Caribbean to charity fairs, it's been a busy summer for QMUL Geography students



## **Georgie Baker, BA Geography:**

Georgie returned from a year abroad studying at the University of California, Berkeley, in May – but was so inspired she flew back for the summer to begin working on her third-year dissertation. The only one selected from QMUL to go to the prestigious American university, the Suffolk-born student had a view over the iconic San Francisco Bay and Golden Gate Bridge from her student halls. “We covered so many different subjects - from the politics of science and technology to food security,” she said. Georgie became fascinated by the alternative food movement and interviewed specialists there on her return visit this summer. “Berkeley is renowned for having a prominent political voice – it was the backdrop to the free speech movement. Studying abroad has opened my mind to so many possibilities and I’m already thinking about taking my masters in demography there too.”

## **Taslima Khanam, BSc Geography:**

From the quite idyll of the Orkney Islands to the hustle and bustle of a London-based charity eco-fair, Taslima Khanam split her summer between fieldwork in Scotland and voluntary work at MADE in Europe – an organisation that offers young Muslims the chance to get involved in campaigns that tackle global poverty and injustice. The field work, led by Professor Dave Horne, involved gathering data on crustaceans known as ostracods. Research into these creatures contributes to the overall understanding of how the environment and climate has changed. “Getting scientific research – as well as voluntary work – on my CV is going to put me in a great position when I come to graduate. I’d really like to work with poor communities as these are the most vulnerable to things like climate change,” Taslima said.



## **Grant Tregonning, BSc Environmental Science:**

Grant was part of a team of three that received funding from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) to visit the Caribbean island of Barbuda to undertake environmental research. The team members, who also included **Mel Weston** (BSc Environmental Science with Business Management) and **Prince Frank** (BSc Geography), each focused on one aspect of the mangroves. “Susceptible to environmental change, the mangrove is a good barometer for checking things like water quality in the marine environment,” Grant explained. “The island is undergoing a lot of change and there is an ongoing struggle between the need to develop and the need to protect the environment from human impact.” The research will form part of the now third-years’ dissertations.

# QMUL Geography to welcome artist in residence

The School of Geography will be welcoming Nadege Meriau to its home in East London as the French artist begins a three-month residency exploring ‘Home Futures’ in collaboration with geographer Dr Richard Baxter. From January 2015, Nadege Meriau will help plan an exhibition at The Geffrye Museum and produce photographic work in collaboration with members of the Centre for Studies of Home, a partnership between QMUL and The Geffrye. This

new collaboration connects with Dr Baxter’s on-going Leverhulme Trust-funded research. An exhibition planned for 2016 will provide a brief biography of a modernist high-rise estate, the Aylesbury Estate (pictured right) in South London. The project is funded by the Creativeworks London Creative Entrepreneur-in-Residence grant which enables an entrepreneur to do a short-term placement with a research partner.

[www.studiesofhome.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.studiesofhome.qmul.ac.uk)



Photograph © Richard Baxter.

# World View 2014: photo competition winners

From the British Museum in London to the Mueller glacier in New Zealand, Queen Mary School of Geography students captured their view of the world for this year's photography competition.

With entries from across the School, this year's images were inspired by four categories designed to help students think about geographical themes: 'My Place in the World', 'Resilient Earth', 'City Life', 'Boundaries'.

**Winner: Francis O'Shea**, PhD student. *British Museum, London.*

"I recently started taking wide-angle photographs and I wanted to find places that emphasise the distortions that result from wide angle imagery. The Reading room and glass roof in the British Museum is a subject that is often photographed, however in this image the overwhelming stature of the reading room compared to the individuals cast in the blue light of dusk create a unique and striking composition."



**Runner-up: Cianna Wyshnytzy**, PhD student. *Seven Sisters, Sussex.*

"This photo shows the resilience of England's coastal cliffs and remarkable shape our landscape can take. Constant wave action, dictated by forces outside of our planet's direct control, has eroded and sculpted these iconic landforms and will continue to do so. This photograph is therefore a simple snapshot in time, capturing a view that will never be seen in person again."

To see all the images submitted, visit the School's Flickr pages: [qmul.geography](http://qmul.geography)

The competition for 2015 will be announced in the new year.



## News in brief

- Thinking about a PhD? A postgraduate research open event will run at QMUL on 24.11.14 from 4.30-7.30pm in The Octagon, Mile End Campus. [www.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.qmul.ac.uk)
- **Professor Chris Philo** (University of Glasgow) will deliver the annual David Smith lecture at QMUL on 26.11.14.
- Ever wondered what it's like to be a student at QMUL? Read our new student blogs at: [blogs.studentlife.qmul.ac.uk](http://blogs.studentlife.qmul.ac.uk) and spot our star geographers and environmental scientists.
- Ready for specification changes at KS3, GCSE and A Level? **The Geographical Association East London Branch** will be holding an event this semester for teachers...more details to follow on our website.
- Applying for undergraduate study in 2015? A new exciting event, the **QMUL Festival of Geography**, will be held in the new year for all offer holders...watch this space.
- The School hosts free research seminars every Tuesday during term time. See our website's event list for details [www.geog.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk)

