

# Geography

News on Geography and  
Environmental Science



Queen Mary  
University of London

## Congratulations to the class of 2015



GRADUATES FROM the School of Geography threw their hats to the air and celebrated in the sunshine at Queen Mary University of London's summer graduation.

Head of School **Professor Alison Blunt** said: "Our graduates should feel very proud of all they have achieved in terms of their hard work, their enthusiasm for their studies, and their contributions to the life of the School."

Each year, the School of Geography gives a number of awards in recognition of exceptional academic achievement and this year's recipients included **Georgie Baker, Cheryl Briars, Zeenat Parker** and **Gabriel Streich**. Four graduates also

won awards from QMUL including **Will Johnstone, Hui Ying Wong, Zeenat Parker** and **Gabriel Streich**.

The celebratory mood continued as this summer's *National Student Survey* results showed that the School of Geography has been ranked top in London for physical geography and environmental science (94 per cent for overall student satisfaction). Students reported high scores of satisfaction for human geography too at 93 per cent – second in London for this subject.

"At the core of our approach is the provision of world-class teaching in a supportive, collegiate environment. These results show that our ethos is reflected in the

day-to-day student experience, in which we will continue to invest," Professor Blunt added.

The *National Student Survey 2015*, completed by final-year students across the UK each spring, ranked Queen Mary University of London in the top ten among Russell Group universities and joint first in London for student satisfaction.



- See more graduation photos on QMUL Geography's Flickr [www.flickr.com/photos/qmulgeog](http://www.flickr.com/photos/qmulgeog)
- Join 'Queen Mary School of Geography Alumni' group on [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)



# Geographical skills in the workplace



QMUL GEOGRAPHY STUDENT **Rosemary Cargill** got to grips with planning, environmental management and sustainability this summer as she set about researching potential career moves ahead of her graduation in 2016.

First stop for the BSc Geographer was Hertfordshire County Council's Environment Department where she worked with the Spatial and Land Use Planning Team. She helped process planning applications and got to practise her geographical information systems (GIS) skills.

"I met the Flood Management team and was lucky enough to go on a site visit to a quarry where vast pits were being transformed into lakes," she said. "I got an insight into everything that takes place and realised my degree is quite flexible – everyone I met had studied geography!"

Next, she joined the Sustainability Team for two weeks at Queen Mary. Utilising her transferable skills, they tasked her with working on the university's new sustainable catering policies as well as helping to plan events such as Go Green Week. "I also found out about how EU and UK law is making sustainability an integral part of business."

Rosemary said using her summer to get out into the world of work had helped her start to think about the future. "I've managed to get a clear picture of what life after university might look like," she said. "Student life differs from what is expected of you at work but you take away so much knowledge and experience from your time at university. Now I know what paths I can explore, what skills and knowledge I need, and have got new experience to help me get where I want to go."

Geography careers adviser **Dr Emily Lines** said QMUL Geography graduates were highly sought after by employers. "Some 96 per cent\* of our graduates were in work or further study six months after graduation – higher than the national average for geography," she said. "Whether taking subject-specific skills and applying them in the workplace like Rosemary has, or by using the vast array of transferable skills that come with studying our subjects, our graduates are valued for their expertise and flexibility."

 **'Queen Mary Careers for Geographers'** or [www.careers.qmul.ac.uk](http://www.careers.qmul.ac.uk)

\*Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) Survey 2014

## Geographical Association

The School of Geography is home to the East London Branch of the Geographical Association. Join us for a series of events this academic year:

### 18.11.15 **Polar and ice**

Subject knowledge update for teachers and students

### 02.12.15 **Carbon and water cycles**

Preparation for teachers ahead of A Level 2016

### 27.01.16 **Global Development Goals – past, present and future**

Preparation for teachers ahead of A Level 2016

### 16.03.16 **Fieldwork – changing places: identity and belonging**

Preparation for teachers ahead of A Level 2016

### 06.04.16 **Physical geography**

Revision class for Year 12 students

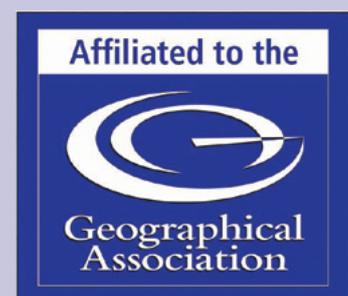
### 08.04.16 **Human geography**

Revision class for Year 12 students

### 24.06.16 **A taste of QMUL Geography**

Taster lecture for Year 12 students

[www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/events](http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/events) or email [k.amis@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:k.amis@qmul.ac.uk)



# Global history of London's consumerism explored



Students and staff examining examples of eighteenth-century Chinese porcelain at the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre, Shoreditch, with Will Johnstone (right).

STUDENTS HAD UNIQUE access to London archives this summer as they took part in a project piecing together evidence of consumer behaviour from eighteenth-century London. The work was funded by Queen Mary's QResearchers scheme which enables students to work alongside academics on research projects.

While there is a large amount of research and documentation on the heirloom collections of wealthy families, this pilot project was designed to explore the influence of Asian goods on the lives of the city's everyday people.

Guided by experts from Museum of London Archaeology and the Museum of London, students combed through boxes of eighteenth-century artefacts

excavated from sites in the City of London. Trained by staff to recognise genuine imported porcelain and other goods from South Asia, they used other London archives to establish ownership too.

Geographer **Will Johnstone**, who worked with History and English students Roshni Khunti and Emma Briscoe, made a link between fragments of Chinese Porcelain found at Crosswall – a road just north of the Tower of London – and a skilled craftsman, Francis Joyce, who lived there.

“We used records at the London Metropolitan Archives to trace the deposit to Joyce's mother Ann. It seems that her death resulted in a large amount of her possessions being thrown down the privy, including her prized porcelain,”

Will explained. “Tracing a small part of the place that global trade (and the presence of the British Empire) occupied in the lives of disparate groups of people has been challenging and fascinating, and I've enjoyed using these unique methods to work on this project.”

QMUL's **Professor Alastair Owens** – a historical geographer whose collaborative research with Museum of London Archaeology on the material history of the metropolis gave rise to this project – said the work had given a new insight into the city's constantly changing population and its consumer behaviour.

“The East India Company brought goods into London from all over South Asia and yet so far we know very little about the influence this had on the lives of what was referred to as ‘the middling sort’ – or emerging middle class,” he said. “We can see from this project that the group was actively buying, and throwing away, goods that were coming from the Empire – it wasn't an activity restricted to elite, wealthy families. I hope these findings prompt more interest in this transitional period of the capital's geographically influenced history.”



[www.materialculturelondon.com](http://www.materialculturelondon.com)

## Research news in brief

- **Professor Catherine Nash** has been awarded a BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant for a project entitled: Interspecies Iceland: more-than-human geographies, genealogies and family histories.
- **Dr Mirela Barbu** is joining us this autumn as a post-doctoral research associate to work with Professor Adrian Smith and a team on a new research project entitled: 'Working Beyond the Border: European Trade Agreements and Labour Standards'.
- **Dr Tim Brown** has been working in a team assessing the impact of a new breast cancer awareness film for the African-Caribbean community.
- **Dr Al James's** article “Work-life ‘balance’, recession and the gendered limits to learning and innovation (or, why it pays employers to care)” was one of 16 papers shortlisted by the 2015 Rosabeth Moss Kanter Award for Excellence in work-family research.

# Stepping stones to university

IS GLOBALISATION GOOD or bad? That is the question that a group of Year 12 geographers from two schools in London's Tower Hamlets – St Paul's Way Trust School and Mulberry School for Girls – have explored during the past year with QMUL Geography student mentors.

Pupils followed a bespoke tutorial programme called Stepping Stones which involved fortnightly tutorials, taster lectures at QMUL and the preparation of a final essay that was marked by the university's academics. **Dr Stephen Taylor**, who oversees the project, is encouraged by the first year of the scheme. "The Stepping Stones project aims to raise aspiration and confidence in local pupils, and it's fantastic to see that several have already decided to apply to university after taking part."

From 2016, pupils who complete the scheme will qualify for a lowered conditional offer if they choose to apply to QMUL Geography. The alternative offer represents



*Stepping Stones team L-R: Tonya France, Shajiyah Begum-Uddin, Lucy McCabe and Mishma Abraham.*

a maximum two grade reduction in entry requirements and is consistent with the university's commitment to investing in pupils of the highest intrinsic talent and potential. "We're keen to partner

with more local schools to build on our successes this year, and to identify, develop and encourage the geographers of the future," said Dr Taylor.

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## The School welcomes new staff



*Dr Anna Bourne*

### **Dr Anna Bourne**

*Lecturer in Physical Geography.* Anna is a quaternary scientist specialising in understanding the chronology of past environmental change by examining volcanic ash in ice and marine cores. She joins us from Swansea University.

### **Dr Kerry Holden**

*ESRC Future Leaders Postdoctoral Fellow.* Kerry's Economic and Social Research Council-funded research is on 'The Promise of Science: deliberating on biomedicine, health



*Dr Kerry Holden*



*Dr Regan Koch*

and society,' focusing specifically on Uganda.

### **Dr Regan Koch**

*Lecturer in Human Geography.* Regan joins us from UCL, where he completed his PhD and was a teaching fellow in Urban Studies and Geography. His research focuses on public space, urban sociality and culture, and the experience of life in cities.

### **Dr Ashok Kumar**

*Leverhulme Early Career Fellow.* Ashok will join our researchers in



*Dr Ashok Kumar*

economy, development and social justice to explore the impact that Asia's recent labour shortage has had on sweatshop conditions.

### **Dr Caron Lipman**

*Lecturer in Human Geography.* Caron's research interests span geographies of belief, contemporary engagements with the past, and intimate geographies of home, belonging and identity.

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



*Dr Caron Lipman*



# Head to the Highlands for summer fieldwork



ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE WITH Business Management student **Ebony Acheampong** swapped the hustle and bustle of London for the remoteness of one of the northern-most valleys ever glaciated on the British mainland this summer to discover more about how scientists understand past climate change.

By analysing the stones on moraines – piles of debris left behind by retreating glaciers – researchers in this region have begun to build a clearer picture of what the climate, and therefore environment, would have been like 12,000 years ago.

The third-year student travelled to Strath Dionard, Sutherland, to examine the mountain landscape for herself and test out the methodology used by researchers for her own dissertation.

Her project was inspired by the recent work of Geography's **Dr Sven Lukas**.

“Recent methodological refinements have helped make data collection in this area even more accurate, so it’s an important and developing area of inquiry,” he said.

This period of geological history – known as the Younger Dryas – is

of particular interest because it is considered a model for rapid climate change in the past. Understanding more about it can help predict how human-induced climate change may affect the planet in the future. “It allows researchers to understand where so-called ‘points of no return’ or ‘tipping points’ exist in the Earth’s system,” Dr Lukas added.

Ebony, who received funding from Queen Mary’s Expedition Fund, will focus on the study of cold environments as she enters her final year of study. “I hope to learn more about the different processes that occur in such cold environments and build my knowledge on glaciation, especially how the past and present is affected by this substantial part of environmental studies.”

Dr Lukas will be returning to the region in May 2016 to host a Leverhulme International Network meeting. Experts from across Europe will discuss research to increase understanding of Younger Dryas glaciation.



# Photo competition winners announced

OUR GEOGRAPHERS AND environmental scientists sent images from all over the world for this year's 'World View 2015' photo competition. With more than 100 entries, it wasn't an easy task to choose the winners, but the panel enjoyed the journey as they viewed images from Honduras to Mauritius, Germany to New York, Switzerland to New Zealand and right back here in London too. Students and staff were inspired by four themes: • **My Place in the World** • **Resilient Earth** • **City Life** • **Boundaries**



**Winner: Joshua Leigh**, BSc Geography.  
*Schwarzensteinkees Valley, Austria – My Place in the World.*

“We spent hours in the field and began to know the valleys we were working in like the back on our hands. For that month and the subsequent month when I was writing up my report, the small mountain valley in the Austrian Alps felt like my own. I wanted to show the researcher looking back at what he had been studying that day, contemplating the fluvial processes that are shaping river channels.”

**Runner-up: Rebecca Griggs**, BA Geography.  
*Mumbai, India – My Place in the World.*

“My image highlights a social power imbalance between a Dabbawala and a white collar worker employed by the American multinational banking company. What's powerful here is the initial ignorance of the intelligence of the service-providing Dabbawalas who work so efficiently; only one in 16 million lunch boxes gets delivered late.”

• To see all the images, visit [www.flickr.com/photos/qmulgeog/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/qmulgeog/)

