

Geography

News on Geography and
Environmental Science



Queen Mary Geography Society hosts former President of the Maldives

Climate change is one of the most important issues in the world today. **Mohamed Nasheed**, former President of the Maldives, gave a guest lecture to over 150 people at QMUL this February. The lecture, organised by **Queen Mary Geography Society (QMGS)**, addressed crucial political and scientific issues and the need for a low carbon development strategy and was introduced by **Dr Simon Carr**. In his introduction, Dr Carr explained current climate model data, suggesting that a 2°C global temperature rise is all but certain. President Nasheed followed this up using the Maldives as a case example, referring to strategies such as sustainable energy solutions.

Whilst he recognised his own country might become a “modern day Atlantis,” Nasheed suggested the resilient Maldivians are capable of adapting and he hopes that the Maldives can lead the way, alongside Sri Lanka and Bhutan, in



Climate change talk guest lecturers and hosts, L-R: Jason Lynch (QMGS President), President Mohamed Nasheed, Dr Simon Carr, Will Flynn (QMGS Vice-President)

becoming carbon neutral. The hope is that he can help inspire changes in the wider global community, which may subsequently save the Maldives, and the planet. “Thank you @QMULGeogSoc for a lovely afternoon. Enjoyed speaking to you all & discussing sustainable solutions for our global challenges,” tweeted President Nasheed. The society was delighted to host such a high profile speaker and look forward to organising many more academic talks of this calibre in the near future.

- Follow [@QMULGeogSoc](https://twitter.com/QMULGeogSoc) on Twitter for news, updates and forthcoming events

Launch of three new masters programmes

Combining the latest research on global health, health geography, political economy, science and technology studies, and population health, two innovative new programmes – **Global Health Geographies MA/MRes** and **Development and Global Health MA** – interrogate the intersections of global health and development politics. A third new programme, **Development and International Business MSc**, offers a framework for exploring the changing relationship between states and markets, politics of development, foreign direct investment,

international institutions of global political-economic governance, global working lives, economic restructuring, migrant labour, multinational companies, work, geo-politics, industrialization and development.

Both health degrees challenge students to think differently about politics, inequality and health; while the business masters aims to advance interdisciplinary knowledge on the internationalisation of business in the context of a contested history and politics of development.

The degree programmes are open for applications with teaching commencing in 2017. All postgraduate students have access to the excellent facilities in QMUL's new Graduate Centre, opened in early 2017.



Fieldwork at the heart of all we do

Fieldwork plays a vital role in both our geography and environmental science teaching programmes at QMUL. It takes learning from the classroom out into the world and turns it into a real and shared experience. Our research training modules in the first year are supported by numerous fieldwork projects conducted in a range of rural and urban settings; then in the second and third years students can take part in specialist modules that involve longer, overseas field classes. Below are some reflections from some of our field trips this year.

Living Liverpool

First-year students on [Geography BA](#) and [Human Geography BA](#) courses, took this new, compulsory field trip to Liverpool as part of the [Reinventing Britain](#) module. They learnt about economic, social and cultural change in Britain over the last three decades, the importance of studying the geography of change, the patterns of socio-economic growth and decline, and how cities and regions react to change.

“I’ve learnt more than I could ever imagined. Apart from the fact that my geographical knowledge has expanded, more understanding of health, culture and economy and everything in between, I’ve learnt about the people I share BA Geography with at QMUL. The different stories of the people who attend this university, the social environment that promotes successful academics is well-established at QMUL.” **Danial Naqvi**, Human Geography BA 2019



Geographers on the steps of the Lady Lever Art Gallery at Port Sunlight, Liverpool.
© Danial Naqvi

Learning in Suffolk

[Geography BSc](#) and [Environmental Science BSc](#) first-year students explored the long term evolution of the coastline and the River Stour at Stutton Ness in East Anglia. They worked on measurement of beach profiles and surface elevation, developing surveying, mapping and geospatial skills, while also exploring issues and approaches to coastal management at Dunwich-Minsmere.



First-year students getting to grips with surveying skills in East Anglia.
© Michelle Day

“The knowledge we’ve acquired over these few days – with the help of our lecturers – will be handy to us in the future, because not only is it useful for upcoming assessments or even work, but now that we know how to fill out certain forms, work effectively in groups, meet new people and use certain field equipment, future trips will be more fun because there will be less time spent on learning something completely foreign to us.”

Katherine Gatehouse and **Kendra Gattiker**, Geography BSc 2019

Ecological interactions in Croatia

Environmental science students taking the [Ecological Interactions](#) module took a residential field trip to Croatia where they applied and consolidated the theory learnt in lectures in a variety of real field settings.

“We learnt many new useful field skills and a wide range of information about the Balkan ecology and how the local Karstic geology influences ecosystems. Learning in the field made the theory make more sense and skills such as water sampling, depth testing and pitfall trapping can be translated into our individual dissertations. Overall, this trip was a perfect balance of work and personal and gave us an opportunity to integrate further with our biology peers, which is what we love most about our degree; the chance to make so many new friends!”

Jason Lynch, **Will Flynn** and **Freddie Ward** Environmental Science BSc 2018



Environmental scientist drift sampling in Croatia. © Jason Lynch

Mumbai Unbound

Development Futures: Mumbai Unbound is a third year module which explores the geographical diversity of people's lived experiences of contemporary social, economic, political and cultural transformations in twenty-first century India. The module encourages students to challenge dominant (western) understandings of the city, economy and development and to theorise back from the empirical realities of the global South.

"The trip to Mumbai has been the highlight of my degree – it was full of learning experience, but not only from an academic perspective. By communicating with the locals and being in a foreign environment, we experienced a new culture very different to what we are used to. Thank you to the lecturers and School of Geography for organising such an amazing field trip, which we will remember forever!" **Farhasaad Shahid**, Human Geography BA 2017



Helping Dabbawallas to deliver lunches in Mumbai's financial district.
© Philippa Williams



Students explore wetland and river restoration projects in Florida.
© Natalie Ludgate

Visiting Florida

As part of the **Environmental Management Applications** module, students explored the physical, environmental, political and economic issues surrounding a range of restoration and management schemes in South Florida's fluvial, terrestrial, estuarine, coastal and marine environments.

"The best part of the field trip was being able to meet leading experts, professionals and stakeholders at the forefront of managing and restoring the Everglades' fragile conditions. Through fruitful and engaging interactions, we were able to gain profound insights into management issues surrounding efforts to restore different environments within the Everglades, which usually transcended political, social and economic spheres."

Koh Yi Thong, Geography BSc 2017

Urban futures in America

Second and third year geographers explored economic change and new urban forms; de-industrialisation, low-paid work and community responses; residential segregation and the ethnic division of labour; the post-industrial city and changes to the politics of public space; counter-cultural histories and civic space and hyper-reality and the changing urban experience across areas in Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

"The field trip was an amazing experience – I had the opportunity to meet with organisations and people who I would not normally meet, to hear stories of people who formed and are part of organisations such as CARECEN Day Labour Centre or the Watts Labour Community Action Committee, and go down to Skid Row and those who have 'seen it all'. You can go to LA anytime, but you'll never have the experience of LA that QMUL has to offer. A truly wonderful and insightful experience it was." **Adil Yousaf**, Geography BA 2018



Geographers learn about development of a contemporary city and its possible futures in Los Angeles. © Adil Yousaf



Students using dendrochronology technique to determine the age of trees.
© Stefano Brighenti

River science in Italy

Masters students on the **Integrated Management of Freshwater Environments (IMFE) MSc** programme had the opportunity to do fieldwork on the near-natural Fiume Tagliamento in Italy.

"One of the best days was when we completed the fieldwork for our research project. We measured tree age, height, island size and shape, and looked at the vegetation cover and diversity. I particularly enjoyed the opportunity to try out dendrochronology (using tree rings to age trees) through taking tree cores. It's harder than it looks! For me the biggest challenge was in learning to observe and interpret river functioning within the wider landscape."

Hazel Wilson, IMFE MSc 2017

Worldview 2017 winners announced

Worldview is the School of Geography's annual photo competition in which students, staff and alumni can submit images across five categories designed to help them think about geographical themes: Boundaries – City Life – My Place in the World – My Time at Queen Mary – Resilient Earth. This year we have also introduced a new prize for the best photograph representing inclusivity.

Winner: Eithne Nightingale, PhD student

City Life – Afternoons at An Viet, Hackney.

“Afternoons at An Viet in Hackney are a hive of activity with Vietnamese pensioners meeting up to challenge each other at Mah Jong and at table tennis and just for a chat. I photographed and filmed the pensioners at play for the film *Passing Tides* about Linh Vu who escaped Vietnam with her father Thanh Vu at the age of eight. Thanh Vu set up the An Viet community centre in Hackney nearly 30 years ago. I have known Thanh Vu since he arrived in Hackney and when I helped him find premises and funding for English and mother tongue classes. I recently helped Thanh Vu get his autobiography published which we launched with a screening of the film. Thanh Vu still runs the An Viet centre.”



Runner-up: Sharon Ball, Global Development Futures MA student

City Life – Fishing in the slums, hutments, Mumbai.

“The coach lurched to a standstill in Mumbai traffic, gazing over the view of hutments by the road, a bricolage of make-shift homes and faded colours. The patterning of informal architecture, clothes drying on window ledges and satellite dishes distracted me at first from the filthy rubbish-strewn river below. A movement caught my eye as children play in the midday sun. A young boy cast his home-made rod in to the river, another sat fixing his, while a third looks down to see what his friend may catch.”

Highly commended: Mishma Abraham, Environmental Science BSc student

City Life – Winter lights at Canary Wharf.

“The business district of Canary Wharf is known for its opulence defined by well-lit high rise structures. As part of the Winter Lights installation, artists tried to recreate such an atmosphere using nature, especially trees within urban parks. Seen here is the Horizontal Interference installation created using neon coloured ribbon-like material which were wrapped around the trees to add to Canary Wharf's natural vibrancy.”



- See all images submitted to the photo competition at [flickr.com/photos/qmulgeog](https://www.flickr.com/photos/qmulgeog)

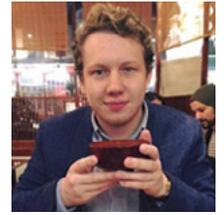
Graduate mentors current students

Launched in 2015, [QMentoring](#) connects undergraduate students with a member of our alumni community, or a UK-based professional, who can provide first-hand insight into their business or industry. The scheme is designed to help students make better informed career choices, build professional networks and potentially gain work experience. School of Geography graduate, [Oliver Bowler](#), shares his experience of being a QMentor.

“International development is a wonderful career to be in, however, it is notoriously cut-throat and difficult to get that first leg up into the industry. There is so much competition from so many graduates for so few jobs. Many fields are similar (law, economics, etc.), however, in international development the majority of applicants are driven by one goal – to help people in the developing

world. Throughout my career, I have met some fantastic and motivated people and I think it is unfortunate that not all of them have been able to break into the sector and let their enthusiasm and drive contribute to making the world a better place. My decision to become a QMentor is linked to this; the entry into a job doesn't need to be as difficult if students are given the right guidance on what they should be doing now to improve their chances. As a proud QMUL graduate, I want to give back and help those who want to help others. It is truly invaluable to have as much access as possible to the professional world when you are studying throughout your undergraduate years. Mostly, it makes the eventual jump from university life to professional life a lot easier. It also builds confidence for skills that are invaluable once someone has graduated, such as networking with other

professionals and communicating with a range of people at different stages on their professional journey. Finally, it is the ultimate opportunity for an undergraduate to dip their toe in the water and find out whether their dream job really is what they want to do, and what steps they can do now to increase their chances. Mentorship is a very rewarding experience, it is great to use your experiences and give back to a community which you yourself have been nurtured within. My own journey is very personal as I want to give individuals that have aspirations to help others in the world every possible chance to achieve their dream.”



- Find out more at qmentoring@qmul.ac.uk

Alumna's transition to finance career



Charlotte Adams graduated with a Geography BSc degree in 2012 and now works as an accountant for the [Royal Bank of Scotland \(RBS\)](#). She shares with us her experiences at QMUL and how she moved into her current role.

“I joined the RBS soon after graduation as a trainee accountant. I made the transition into the City as a result of my time at Queen Mary and their partnership with the [East London Business Alliance \(ELBA\)](#) charity. The charity works to provide students in east London universities with the opportunity to experience networking, key business skills and learning at some of the most prestigious financial firms in the world based in the City and Canary Wharf. While in my second year, I applied to join the ELBA business school scheme to attend weekly sessions to understand working life, what

is expected from future applicants and make key contacts. I was fortunate to spend time with people from Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Barclays, Thomson Reuters, RBS and so on. I attended every session, asked questions and understood what an amazing opportunity students at Queen Mary and other east London universities had. In my third year I was asked to become a Student Ambassador for ELBA where I held telephone interviews for future applicants to the programme, gave a speech to over 200 people in a local school and was invited on to other events held in the City.

At a CV session with RBS, I was lucky enough to meet an individual who offered me a 12-week internship within the investment bank once I finished my degree (apparently people with geography degrees make great finance professionals!). As part of my internship I worked with people across the business, attended

senior management meetings and helped to produce a monthly pack giving an overview of the business which was read by the CFO. At the end of my internship I was offered a permanent role within the business and 4 years later I am still at RBS, a fully qualified accountant and enjoying my role in finance.

I hear again and again that people with geography or environmental-based degrees have the ability to make great professionals in the banking industry as our experience allows us to view things in a different way and have a more holistic view. Queen Mary has great proximity to the City and Canary Wharf where there is the opportunity to try something new and lead a fulfilling career. I am thankful to QMUL and ELBA for the opportunities that were offered to me and I do not think I would be where I am in my career today without the support and experience offered to me.”

Research news in brief

- **Professor Simon Lewis** is running a major project – funded by the Leverhulme Trust and in collaboration with the Natural History Museum – on early human settlement in the Breckland region of East Anglia which contain rich and diverse Palaeolithic archaeological record, extending back some 600,000 years. The [Breckland Palaeolithic Project](#), now in its second year, has undertaken archaeological excavations, geological and borehole investigations and geophysical surveys, including identifying a new Palaeolithic site, which will be explored further during the project.
- New research – published by the [Independent Food Aid Network \(Ifan\)](#), chaired by **Professor Jon May** – has found that there are at least 2,000 food banks in the UK, a higher number than previously thought, giving out emergency food parcels on a weekly basis to people in hardship. The research was widely covered in national media, including the Guardian, Independent and Times.
- In January, **Professor Kate Spencer** met with [United Nations](#) Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Hazardous Substances and Wastes to discuss the potential impacts of leaking and eroding historic landfill sites on the environment and communities. A team from the UN and [Friends of the Earth](#) visited one of Professor Spencer's research sites in Essex to look at an area currently undergoing erosion. Professor Spencer has also been talking to Radio 4 about her research – search for 'What Lies Beneath: The Legacy of Landfill' on the BBC iPlayer to hear more.
- A new report by PhD student **Liam Harney** and **Professor Jane Wills** highlights how universities can enrich their own neighbourhoods by developing long-term partnerships with community organisations.
- During fieldwork in Scotland last summer **Professor Dave Horne** found a rare species of ostracod in the Loch Leven National Nature Reserve. He will be revisiting the site for further investigation, assisted by two students supported by the [QMUL Expedition Fund](#), later this summer. Studying this species of ostracod and others like it help scientists to better understand their distributions in relation to climate, and improve reconstructions of past climates.
- **Professor Jane Wills** was presented with a '15 Years Living Wage Champion' award for her role in providing research and leadership as part of [Living Wage Week](#) last October. Her research provided important evidence about the impact of low pay on Londoners when the Living Wage campaign started in 2001. She has since tracked the progress of the Living Wage as it has moved from east London to shape national policy debates. QMUL became the first accredited university in the UK in 2006 to pay a real Living Wage.
- Geographical research was recognised in this year's [Engagement and Enterprise Awards](#): PhD student **Eithne Nightingale** won an award for her project 'Child Migrant Stories'; **Carey Newson's** 'Teenage Bedrooms' project, as well as the [Centre for Studies of Home](#) were shortlisted for awards.

Other news

- The School of Geography is the first School at QMUL to have obtained a [bronze Athena SWAN award](#) under the new, expanded criteria which now covers gender equality more broadly and not just barriers to progression that affect women.
- We are introducing a [new field trip to Malaysia](#) from the 2017-18 academic year – led by **Dr Gale Raj-Reichert** – where students will be able to learn about and experience issues concerning economic growth, industrialisation, and labour conditions in Kuala Lumpur and Penang.
- Final-year students **Koh Yi Thong**, **Lloyd Milner** and **Mishma Abraham** represented the School of Geography at the [British Conference of Undergraduate Research](#) at Bournemouth University this April, where they shared findings of their dissertation projects with a multi-disciplinary audience.
- **Dr Stephen Taylor** and **Kate Amis** plus a team of undergraduates gave a presentation on 'Studying geography at university' at the annual [Geographical Association Conference](#) at the University of Guildford.
- The [East London branch of the GA](#) meets several times a term with events for sixth formers and teachers. This year we enjoyed lectures by **Dr Regan Koch** on urban public space, **Dr Lizzy Day** from Imperial College London on understanding tectonic hazards; as well as spring fieldwork workshops for teachers in Tower Hamlets, including a half day urban fieldwalk on changing places with **Professor Alastair Owens**, as well as investigating place making in the local area with **Kate Amis**. Check the website for upcoming GA events and teachers resources at geog.qmul.ac.uk/teachers
- **Dr Casper Laing Ebbensgaard**, **Dr Edyta Materka** and **Dr Claudia Soares** have been awarded [Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowships](#) for the next three years. More details on their projects will be covered in the next newsletter.
- An indoor street party, 'Home and the City: Celebrating the life on the Kingsland Road' – organised by the [Centre for Studies of Home](#) – was held at the Geffrye Museum of the Home earlier this year. Local residents were invited for an afternoon of tea, cake, and workshops arranged by artists and organisations.
- Masters graduate **Carolina Pinto** (Integrated Management of Freshwater Environments 2013) was awarded an Ecology Prize for her innovative restoration project called '[ReNaturalize](#)' that uses large wood to restore natural processes in the River Mangarai in Brazil.

Read more about these and other news stories at geog.qmul.ac.uk/news