

# Alumni Newsletter

Spring 2021



Welcome to the Durham Geography alumni newsletter. We hope it finds you well in these difficult times. We are keen to have more of a conversation with our alumni and relish telling you about our exciting research initiatives, educational developments and how the Department continues to transform lives. And we are enjoying hearing from many of you about how being at Durham Geography shaped your outlook and helped your careers. We greatly appreciate the growing number of you who are supporting us in our work with employment talks to our undergraduates, with online profiles to give our current and future students a feel for the amazing things a Durham Geography degree makes possible, and with other forms of help. We are just beginning a new initiative to reach out to schools around the world to show them the benefits of a Durham Geography degree, and we hope you will help us in that too. And on how things are currently going, contrary to how press stories that say universities have closed, we have been teaching throughout the pandemic even if we had to teach remotely last spring and this year. We continue to try and give current students a great education, and as many of the opportunities you had as we can.

Hoping you and yours stay safe and well.

**Professor Mike Crang, Head of Department**



*Professor Mike Crang  
Head of Department*

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## Durham Geography and the pandemic

Like all universities, Durham has faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020 we were amongst the very first UK universities to move to online teaching. The shift online took place in less than a week and it is an enormous testament to the hard work and adaptability of all our staff and our students that we were able to complete term 2 teaching without major incident. Students took all their exams online in summer 2020, and since then we have moved to a blended model where most teaching is online but students have a small number of in-person teaching sessions where we can do so with social distancing. Staff spent much of the summer and autumn on 2020 re-designing module and recording lectures to post online, and as anyone who has done this will testify vocally – online teaching takes substantially longer to prepare and do than in-person teaching! Unfortunately, the biggest effect of the pandemic has been on our fieldtrips. Both students and staff value enormously our programme of fieldtrips in the UK and overseas but we have had to take the painful decision to cancel our field trips in Easter and summer 2020, as well as Easter field trips in 2021. Staff are innovating to provide UK-based or online alternatives but we all look forward to getting back into the field as soon as we can safely do so.

## Recent highlights and achievements of the department

The Department of Geography has maintained its leading position and remains amongst the top handful of geography departments in the UK and globally.

Our staff and students have done amazing things and received some impressive accolades, but over the past year our students have really excelled in winning national dissertation prizes and commendations, including **James Lockwood** (*British Hydrological Society prize*), **Riyana Dyson** (*RGS Race Culture and Equality group prize*), **Hannah Sellgren** (*RGS commendation*), **Katy Simms** (*Space, Sexualities and Queer Research Group (SSQRG) Prize*, and **Madeleine Woods** and **Ellie Day** (*Quaternary Research Association prizes*).

Well done to all – the standard of the work produced by our undergraduates is wonderful.

### Ways to get involved

We love hearing from our alumni and there are many ways you can get involved.

Please get in touch with our alumni team ([gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk](mailto:gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk)) to find out more about any of the following initiatives:

**Research and Projects** – get students involved in specific projects to make use of their skills and help them develop new ones.

**Apprenticeships** – let students know about apprentice places or sponsorship of apprentice places within your organisation.

**Alumni Careers Talks** – tell us how has your Geography degree helped your career? Come back to the Department (whether in person or virtually) and speak to our students about your experiences.

**Student Employability Mentoring** – individual mentoring for students who need career advice.

**Alumni Profiles** – answer a few questions about your time at the Geography Department and where your degree has taken you in your career, and join our other alumni in the profile section of our website. This can be in written form, or why not create a short video of yourself and give us a tour of your work place?

**Alumni Lecture Series** – we are currently planning an online event in 2021 as an opportunity to hear one of our world renowned Durham academics speak about their research.

**Internships and Placements** – make students aware of placements or other opportunities within your organisation.

**Reminiscing** – do you have any old stories or anecdotes and even some old photographs that you would like to share and we can include on our website and social media in our Memories of the Department ?

## Alumni lecture series

The Department of Geography is delighted to announce a series of upcoming lectures from current members of staff, showcasing some of the exciting research that is happening within the department. The talks will last approximately 1 hour, with time for questions and discussion, and will be delivered online. They will also be recorded, so if you can't make the live event, you can catch up at your leisure.

- **16 June 2021:** Dr Noam Leshem, on journeys through No Man's Land
- **4 November 2021:** Professor Erin McClymont, on how Antarctic sea ice ecosystems respond to climate change
- **April 2022:** Dr Simon Engelhart, on evidence for earthquakes and sea-level change in the north western USA
- **November 2022:** Professor Louise Amoore, on how algorithms shape our lives



## Alumni careers talks

With the exception of 2020, when the world was turned upside down and we were not able to offer face to face events, we have run a series of alumni career talks over the last four years, where we invite our wonderful alumni back to the Department to talk to our students for an evening of wine, dining and networking. These early evening events are highly valued by our all our students as they get to hear past students discuss their careers and explain how their Geography degree and the skills they learned at Durham have helped them reach and exceed their goals. It not only shows them how important all the elements of their degree are, but also introduces them to careers they had not perhaps considered before.

We have welcomed alumni from the last 30 years of graduates back to the Department. They have all developed careers in wide-ranging industries, including the media & film making, teaching & research, engineering & environmental services, law, the civil service, and retail. It is wonderful to see the hugely diverse career paths and choices our alumni have made, proving that a geography degree really allows you to do almost anything.

If you would like to take part and offer your advice and wisdom to the next generation of graduates, then we would be delighted to welcome you back to the Department. In 2021, we are delivering the talks via an online platform so you can participate wherever you are in the world and with no travel.

Please get in touch with us via email ([gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk](mailto:gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk)) if you would like to get involved.



## Dai Morgan memorial/remembrance

We were sad to hear during the first lockdown of 2020 that a former lecturer, Dr Dai Morgan, had died aged 92. Dai will be recalled by many former students and staff alike: he was a popular character, and passionate in his work on Africa and in promoting African Universities, and was kind and dedicated to many cohorts of Durham Geography students that he taught. Despite a limited funeral event due to the pandemic we were able to pass on a large number of departmental recollections and fond memories that became part of his funeral service.

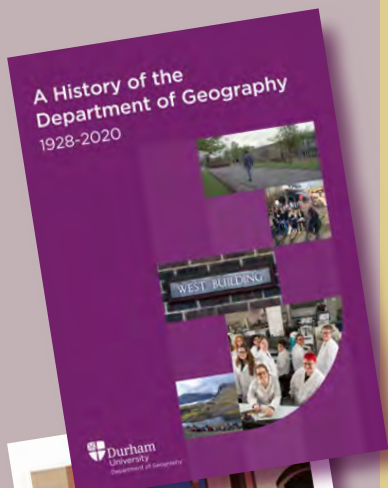


# History of the Department

Durham Geography has a tradition of education and research stretching back to 1928. We have created a written history of the Department, reflecting the diversity of intellectual themes that we have worked on (and often pioneered) and the range of people who have passed through the doors of the West Building and its predecessors.

This work was led by Professor Ian Simmons – well known to many of you – and this wonderful and comprehensive document is now available on the alumni website to download. We hope it will be a living document and will evolve and develop along with the Geography Department for the next 90 years.

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/geography/-alumni/the-department-through-time/departments-history/>



## We need your help!

The Department is looking to increase our recruitment of international students to both our undergraduate and Risk Masters programmes. If you are a graduate from the department living outside the UK, and you would be willing to help us in this effort, please get in touch! There are a number of different ways that you could contribute to our recruitment drive:

- Submit a profile for the alumni section of our website, like those pictured, describing your experience of being at Durham and your path since you finished your degree
- Record a short video about your experiences at Durham and beyond
- Volunteer to answer questions by email from prospective students
- Visit a secondary school in your area to talk about your experience of Durham to prospective students, as Covid-19 restrictions are eased

Your experiences and perspectives, and the lessons you've learned along the way, could make a real difference to prospective students as they consider their next steps. If you are willing to help out, please contact the department alumni team at [gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk](mailto:gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk).



**Martin Pratt**

BA 1990



**Sarah Woodroffe**

BA 2001



**Siobhan Whadcoat**

BSc 2009



**Chris English**

BA 1968

## Our website has changed

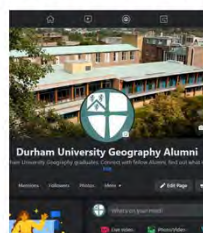
Durham University is revamping its web platform in early 2021, which means that the Geography alumni website (<https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/geography/alumni/>) now has a very different look and feel. As part of the update, we've refreshed both the materials on the page and the ways in which they are organised. Please stop by to look around, and let us know what you think of the changes. We'll be putting out specific calls for contributions to the new site on social media over the next few months, so please check back to see how the site is evolving.

### Welcome to a Global Alumni Community

As one of our alumni you are a part of one of the world's top geography departments and a community of over 8000 other geography alumni who have graduated since 1928. On these pages you will find stories about the department, memories from our alumni and ways to get involved.

[Email the Geography Alumni team](#) →

### Follow us on social media



#### Geography Alumni Facebook

Follow our Facebook page to keep up to date with all our news and reconnect with old classmates.

We encourage you to share your old photos and stories of the Department!



#### Geography Alumni LinkedIn

Join our LinkedIn group to reconnect with classmates and find out the latest news and activities from the Department.

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## Durham weather and climate since 1841: call for photos

Emeritus Professor Tim Burt has been involved in an ongoing project to write a history of the weather records from the Durham Observatory. The Observatory was completed in 1841 and meteorological observations started immediately.

Whilst there was a need for temperature and pressure measurements to correct the astronomical readings, the weather records quickly took on an importance of their own and summaries soon appeared in the *Durham Advertiser*.

Gordon Manley established the Geography Department in 1928 and he was probably the country's best-known climatologist of the twentieth century. He took an immediate interest in the weather station at the Observatory, and his 1941 paper on the Durham meteorological record established its importance.



The Department has run the weather station since then, producing monthly and annual reports to this day. Observations ceased in 1999 when the last resident observer, Audrey Warner, retired, and the readings have since been obtained using an automatic weather station run by the Met Office. Apart from the Radcliffe Observatory in Oxford, Durham has the longest series of weather records for any British university.

Stephen Burt (no relation!) and Professor Tim Burt have now published a book on the Oxford record, entitled *Oxford Weather and Climate since 1767* (2019, Oxford University Press). Tim had run the Radcliffe Meteorological Station for a decade before moving to Durham, and has run the Durham weather station for the last twenty years. Now, Stephen and Tim are writing a book about the Durham weather records. It will contain chapters about the months, seasons and calendar year, followed by a discussion of climate change. Finally, the book will contain a chronology of weather events – and this is where you come in. If you have any photos of weather-related events in Durham or the surrounding area and would like to have them considered for inclusion in the book, please send a copy, digital if possible, with an approximate date and brief explanation to [gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk](mailto:gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk) and we will put you in touch with Tim.

## Institute of Hazard Risk and Resilience (IHRR)

The Institute of Hazard, Risk and Resilience (IHRR) is a world-leading research institute in hazard, risk and resilience-supporting innovative research and training for use in policy and practice, collaborating directly with communities, NGOs and governments.

### **Risk Masters Course**

If you are thinking about completing a Masters, the IHRR offers a Masters in Risk in collaboration with the Geography Department. The MSc offers specialised training in physical hazards that pose risks to communities, whilst the MA explores the social dimensions of risk and resilience through multiple epistemologies that cut across science and social science perspectives.

Find out more visit the Risk Masters website: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/geography/postgraduate-study/>

### **Getting involved with IHRR**

The IHRR are always looking for organisations who would be willing to work with a Durham University/IHRR Risk Masters student on a Vocational Dissertation, supported by an academic Dissertation Supervisor. The project, can be on any aspect of Hazard, Risk or Resilience that is of interest to your organisation. There are different levels of potential involvement, from hosting a student directly, to working with them remotely. If you would like to work with a student or would like to find out more, please email the Risk Masters Programme Director: [Isabella.Bovolo@durham.ac.uk](mailto:Isabella.Bovolo@durham.ac.uk)



## Alumni Fee Scholarship 2021-22

Would you like a scholarship for further study?

Given the current global circumstances, are you considering options for further study, retraining, and career advancement? We can help!

We are keen to support you in realising this ambition through the launch the Durham University Alumni Fee Scholarship. This Scholarship will contribute part of the cost of tuition fees for all postgraduate taught Masters programmes across all faculties of the University - MA, MSc, LLM, PGCE and all MBA and other taught Masters programmes.

As long as you hold a degree from Durham University and you are applying for a course which begins within the 2021-22 academic year, you are automatically eligible for this Scholarship – you do not need to apply separately.

For more information visit the Alumni Fee Scholarship web page. [www.dur.ac.uk/study/pg/finance/alumni/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/study/pg/finance/alumni/)

## An online course exploring the world of international boundaries

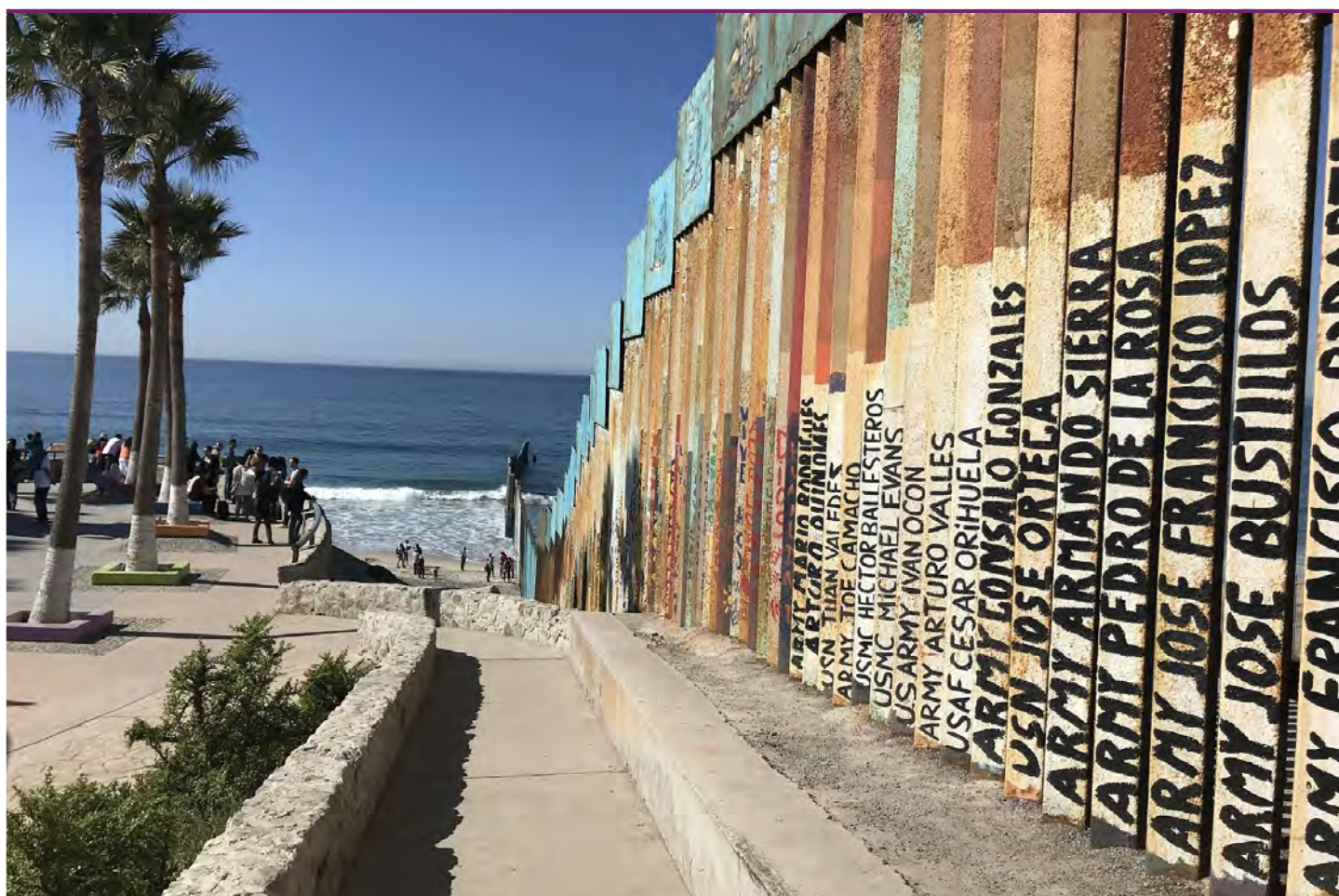
If you have ever wanted to learn more about international boundaries, IBRU, the Department's Centre for Borders Research, has developed an online training course to introduce people to the world of borders and international boundaries.

'Introduction to International Boundaries: Definition, Delimitation and Dispute Resolution' is an online training course that provides a simple, contextual overview of international boundaries and the practical measures that can be taken to resolve international boundary disputes.

Through a series of short online lectures and a final practical exercise, the course explores the relevance of borders and looks at land and maritime boundary disputes, before covering methods available for dispute resolution.

If you are interested in finding out more, visit the IBRU website:

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/ibru/workshops/online/introtoboundaries/>



### Stay in touch

[www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/geography/alumni/](http://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/geography/alumni/)

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Please ensure we have your up to date contact details and email address so we can stay in touch.  
Please let us know if you would prefer not to receive any further mailings from us.