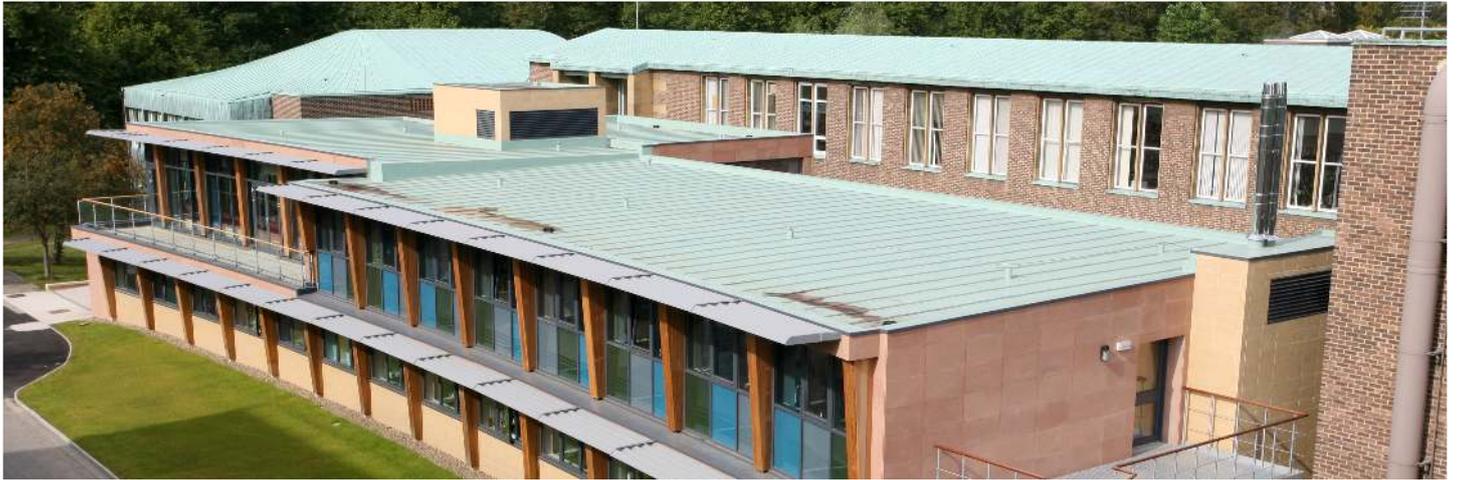


# Alumni Newsletter

Spring 2023



**Welcome to the Durham Geography alumni newsletter. This is another wonderful opportunity to engage with our alumni and to tell you about our exciting research initiatives, educational developments, and how the Department continues to transform lives. As always, we also continue to enjoy hearing from many of you about how being at Durham Geography has helped shape your careers.**

This newsletter comes at a time when we are still dealing with some uncertainties, but also embracing some very exciting opportunities. The external context is forever shifting, and the next academic year will bring financial challenges to UK higher education. The funding model allows universities little wiggle room to increase revenues in a context of geopolitical instability and spiralling energy and living costs; these rising costs are also having direct impacts on our students; there are continuing uncertainties concerning the impacts of Brexit on research funding and collaboration; and we are facing heightened competition from increasingly well-funded international universities. Despite these challenges, there is still plenty to be positive about. We have now enjoyed a full term of in-person-only teaching, which is vital to invigorating our scholarly culture and community. The Vice Chancellor's University Strategy Refresh promises to open exciting new directions concerning education, access and future skills; student experience and wellbeing; international Durham; civic and regional partnership; equality, diversity and inclusion; and environmental sustainability. One of our main concerns as a department is to ensure that we continue to foster an inclusive environment in which all of our students can thrive. We are excited about the new initiatives that we continue to develop to engage with our international students, LGBTQ+ students and their allies, and students who are first in their family to go to university. Our field kit bursaries are helping students from low-income households purchase essential items for fieldwork such as coats, footwear, and rucksacks. We are also rolling out our new carbon reduction policy to ensure that our fieldtrips, research, and other activities are environmentally sustainable.



***Professor Cheryl McEwan***  
*Head of Department*

We greatly appreciate the growing number of you who are supporting us in our work with fascinating and insightful 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 all of the other forms of help that you contribute. Many thanks to all of you for continuing to make Durham Geography a wonderful community.

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## The year ahead

### Greetings from Durham as we come to the end of the autumn term.

Compared to the change and uncertainty of the last few years, this has very much felt like a 'normal' academic year. After two years of much larger than normal cohorts, the department this year took in about 260 Level 1 undergraduates onto the BA and BSc programmes – very much in line with where we expected to be. The university as a whole, having grown to about 21,000 students over the last two years (and thus hitting its target for 2025 several years early!), has reduced the number of incoming students back to pre-pandemic levels. Our large second and third year cohorts are still with us, and as a result we are currently teaching more undergraduates than at any point in the department's history. At the same time, we also have hired a number of new staff to help us through this year and next, so we've managed to maintain the small-group contact, the one-to-one dissertation supervision, and the field trip programme that are all key parts of a Durham Geography degree.



**Professor Alex Densmore**  
*Deputy Head of Department  
and Alumni Lead*

### Field Trips

Speaking of field trips, we are planning for a full resumption of undergraduate field trips this year, at all levels of the programme. September trips to Iceland, Switzerland, and Norway ran as normal this year, with minimal disruption due to Covid. We're planning for a full slate of Easter trips as well, including our first visit to Nepal on the Mountain Hazards module since spring 2019. Easter will also see us roll out our first international trip featuring travel by train, as the Level 3 Geographies of Energy Transition module goes to Copenhagen. This module formerly featured a trip to Cape Town; by switching destinations and swapping flights for train travel, we will make a substantial carbon savings, and also make the journey itself part of the learning on the module. It goes without saying that the students, and staff, are delighted to be embarking on these trips again after several years when it simply hasn't been possible.

### Alumni Events

We've also been able to resume other in-person events, including our alumni careers talks. After a couple of years of holding these on Zoom (and facing declining participation from students), it's been fantastic to give our current students the chance to hear from, and chat with, a range of alumni speakers. We've run two sets of careers talks so far this year, and have heard from alumni who have followed an impressively diverse range of career paths – from investigating fraud and cybercrime with major international banks, to advising the FCDO in Iraq, to helping the Environment Agency reach net zero. Our current students learn so much from these events: they see careers that they might not have been aware of, but more importantly they also hear first-hand about the transferrable skills that they've learned at Durham, and about how to demonstrate those to potential employers. If you've not yet had a chance to speak to our current students about your career, but are interested, please do get in touch!

### Risk Masters

Finally, I'm pleased to report that our Risk Masters taught postgraduate programme is expanding. Instead of the MA or MSc in Risk, students next year will have a choice of three different degrees: Environmental Hazards and Risk (as MA or MSc); Climate, Risk, and Society (as MA or MSc) and Risk, Security, and Politics (MA); and Risk and Data Science (MSc). We've found over the last few years that 'Risk' wasn't always a very informative programme name for prospective students, especially (but not exclusively) for those outside the UK. The more specific programme names, and the clarity around the different pathways that are available, should help us with recruitment, and should also help our graduates by providing more information on what they've actually studied during their time in the department.

We always love to hear from you, and you can get in touch either through the website or by emailing [gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk](mailto:gg-alumni@durham.ac.uk). Thank you as always for all of your contributions to the Department!

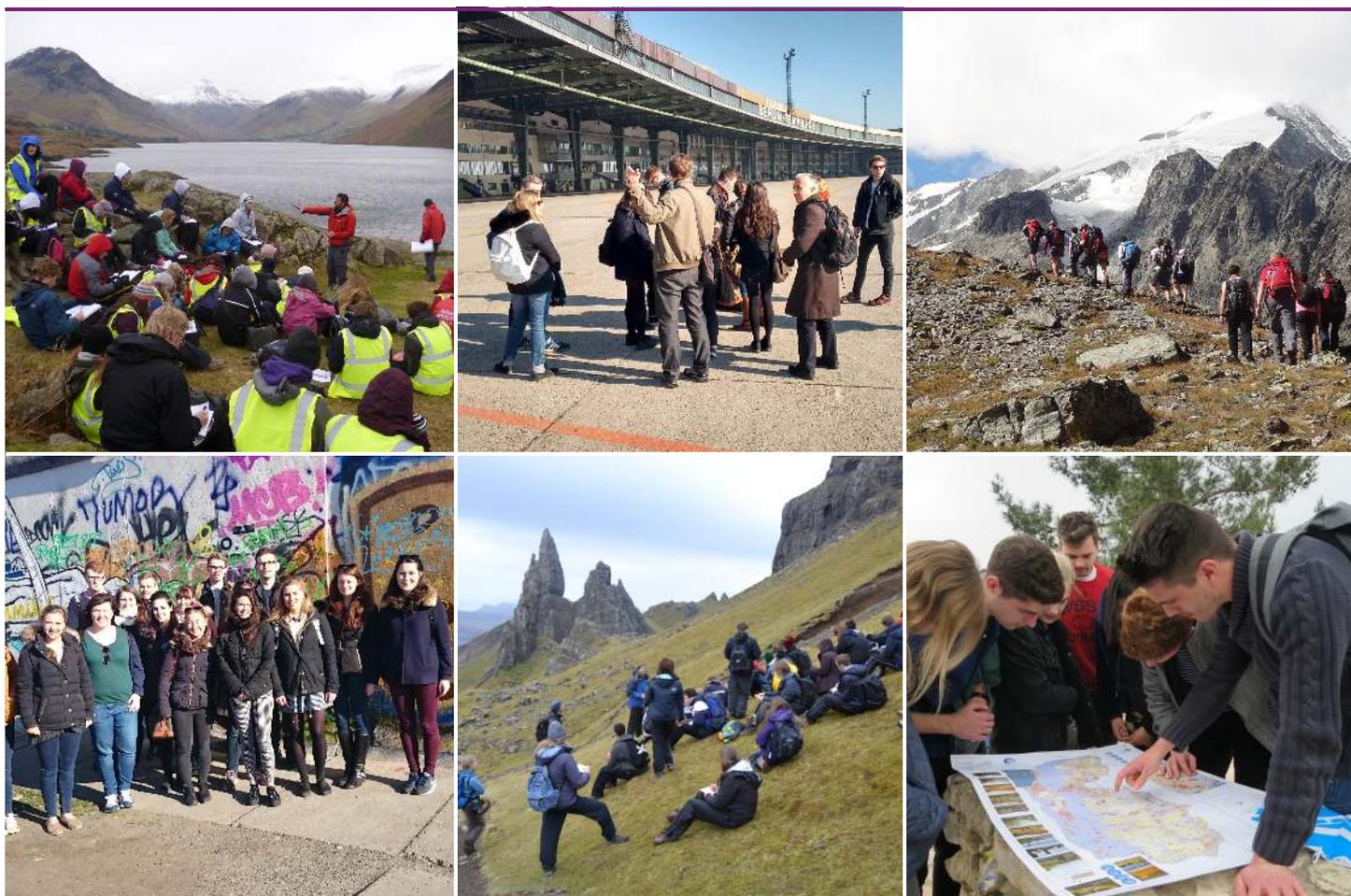
## Field Trip Bursaries

For many of you, field trips were one of the most memorable parts of your time at Durham – a chance to see a new part of the world, to grapple with real-world problems, and to get to know staff and fellow students outside of the usual university setting. For some students, however, field trips are a source of stress and anxiety, especially around the additional (and often unanticipated) costs of securing adequate field kit. Even a waterproof jacket and boots – minimum essential equipment for a week in Skye in March – are beyond the means of some of our students. As a result, some students avoid field trip modules altogether, and give up altogether on the idea of a field-based dissertation, because they simply cannot afford the equipment. To keep our field trips open for as many students as possible, the department recently agreed to arrange a field kit bursary for our most needy students. This provides a one-off payment of £200 to help cover the costs of basic field equipment for all of our students with a household income of less than £25,000 per year. At the moment, we have sufficient departmental funds to cover the costs of the bursary scheme for the next few years. To make this sustainable in the longer term, however, we need your help.

If you have fond memories of Durham Geography field trips and want to ensure that future students can take similar advantage of those opportunities, please consider donating to help us continue the scheme by visiting <https://www.dunelm.org.uk/donations/geography>.

Even a small amount helps, and all donations will be used in full to support our most needy students.

Many thanks in advance for any help that you can provide!



## Research Spotlight

### ***Sea level rise from the Antarctic ice sheet: how much and how fast ?***

Sea level rise is one of society's Grand Challenges. Hundreds of millions of people live close to the coast and will be impacted by rising seas and the increasing frequency of coastal flooding. Sea level has already risen by 20 cm since 1901 and continues to rise at an accelerating rate. An urgent question for scientists to answer for policymakers is how much further will sea level continue to rise, and how fast will it do so?

Here in Durham Geography we are approaching this question with a range of research on past and future sea level. Several of us work on the Antarctic Ice Sheet, which is a major source of sea level rise. Our approach to answering the question of how much, how fast is to look back into the history of the ice sheet and look at past events when the ice sheet saw big changes. This enables us to test models that attempt to simulate future changes in the ice sheet. The results can allow the models to be improved so that they can be used to forecast with more confidence.

Some recent projects led by Dr David Small and Professor Mike Bentley include innovative work to drill through the edges of the ice sheet to look for evidence of when the ice sheet has been smaller in the past. Using new designs of drills, developed in conjunction with UK and US engineers we are sampling bedrock from under 10s or 100s of metres of ice and we can analyse this rock to measure when it was last exposed to the Earth's atmosphere. This allows us to start to map when the ice sheet was smaller and by how much in past warm periods – giving a clear constraint to test and calibrate the models.

A project led by Prof Pippa Whitehouse has been maintaining precise GPS instruments across a large swathe of the continent. The GPS – a much more sophisticated version of those you have in your phone or car satnav – are bolted to rock outcrops that poke through the ice. They can measure movement of the crust as it rebounds in response to the ice sheet losing mass, reducing the weight pressing down on the continent. This movement is occurring at rates slower than the growth of your fingernails and so the GPS equipment has a really impressive accuracy, and a price tag to match! The GPS network run by Pippa with logistic support from British Antarctic Survey has been able to show how the rebound varies regionally depending on where most mass is lost. She has even shown that the GPS can detect even quite subtle changes such as particularly snowy winters which add extra weight to the crust.

Staff and postgraduate students in Durham Geography will continue to work on Antarctica and indeed also on Greenland and on mountain glaciers. We have a global reputation for our polar research and a proud history which extends back to our department founder, Gordon Manley, who undertook work on Greenland climate in the 1920s.



*Field camp in the Antarctic Peninsula (Picture: Mike Bentley)*



*GPS receiver in the Ellsworth Mountains, Antarctica (Picture: Mike Bentley)*

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## Queen's Jubilee Honours List – Belated congratulations

We were delighted to see the award of a military MBE to 2008 Alum, **Dr Danni Collingridge Moore** MBE who was awarded the MBE as a Corporal in the Army Reserve as part of Op RESCRIPT.

In 2020, Dr Collingridge Moore was mobilised to the Covid-19 Taskforce, based in the Cabinet Office, as the health team lead and as a subject matter expert on care homes. Dr Collingridge Moore co-ordinated the sourcing, analysis, and presentation of health data on the Covid-19 dashboard, providing forecasting assessments to identify likely Covid-19 scenarios. The dashboard was briefed to senior ministers and updated daily.

Dr Collingridge Moore was immensely proud of the role undertaken, saying, "The opportunity to be part of the Taskforce, giving a voice to care home residents and fighting their corner during the pandemic, was an honour and a privilege."

Dr Collingridge Moore has recently been awarded a post-doctoral fellowship to continue her research at Lancaster University as the Dowager Countess Eleanor Peel Trust Sir Robert Boyd Fellow. The fellowship will look at identifying appropriate policy recommendations for care homes during pandemics, and how to implement and measure them.



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## Department Achievements in 2022

We were delighted to congratulate three members of the Geography Department who were the recipients of prestigious awards for contributions in their respective fields

**Professor Dave Evans** has been awarded the Clough Medal of the Edinburgh Geological Society for 2022-23. The Clough Medal is the Society's premier award, presented to a geologist whose original work has materially increased the knowledge of the geology of Scotland and/or the north of England, or any geologist working in Scotland or the north of England who has significantly advanced the knowledge of any aspect of geology. <https://www.edinburghgeolsoc.org/home/medallists-and-award-winners/>

**Professor Rebecca Hodge** was the recipient of the 2022 British Society for Geomorphology Gordon Warwick Award for excellence in geomorphological research. <https://www.geomorphology.org.uk/funding-and-grants/awards/>

**Professor Pippa Whitehouse** was the recipient of the 2022 SCAR (Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research) Medal in recognition of excellence in Antarctic and Southern Ocean research and outstanding service to the international Antarctic community. <https://www.geomorphology.org.uk/funding-and-grants/awards/>

We would also like to congratulate **Professor Harriet Bulkeley**, who has been appointed as a member of the Scientific Council of the ERC.

The European Research Council (ERC), set up by the European Union in 2007, awards grants through open competitions to projects headed by starting and established researchers who are working or moving to work in Europe. The Scientific Council is the independent governing body of the ERC and defines the ERC's scientific funding strategy and methodologies. It is composed of 22 members, all eminent scientists and scholars, who represent the scientific community in Europe and are appointed by the European Commission following recommendations by an independent Identification Committee. Harriet is one of only a handful of social scientists on the Council, and her appointment is reflection of the high esteem in which she and her research are held.

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## Professor Gordon McLeod

It is with great sadness that we must let you know of the death of Dr Gordon MacLeod on 14 October 2022.

Gordon grew up on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, was educated at Paisley College of Technology and Lancaster University, and began his academic career at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He joined the Geography Department at Durham University in 1999, where he quickly established his status as an internationally significant thinker and shaper of interdisciplinary debates in urban and regional political economy.

Gordon's PhD thesis developed a regulationist state theory approach to the governance of enterprise and the knowledge economy in Scotland. His early research was a catalyst for many critical interventions and new explanations in urban and regional studies. These shaped discussion of new regionalism and innovative approaches to the state within and beyond geography. His later research concentrated on urban governance and the neoliberal and revanchist construction and destruction of cities across North America and Western Europe. Gordon's distinctive writing style superbly combined multiple literary sources from a wide range of disciplinary fields with deep analysis of political economy, policy, and politics. He inspired scholarship in human geography and the social sciences, and his passion for writing about what he cared about and being unafraid to show how much he cared about it influenced a generation of undergraduate and postgraduate students. He loved to teach and embraced in all of its forms.

Gordon's generosity as a scholar was matched by a gregarious willingness to always share, discuss, and debate ideas at all hours – in or after lectures, on field trips, or over a drink. He was much loved by the entire Durham Geography community. He will be remembered as a great scholar, a brilliant teacher, a sharp dresser, a lover of football and music, an ardent fan of The Godfather and Goodfellas films and, above all, a kind and generous friend. His gentle demeanour, compassion towards others, and his completely charming way of being an intellectual will be very sorely missed.



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## 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-based at Durham University. They support innovative research and training for use in policy and practice, collaborating directly with communities, NGOs and governments. Their commitment is to work with and learn from the widest possible range of stakeholders living with hazard and risk – empowering people, fostering resilience, and improving lives, both now and in the future.

They run a series of seminars which are free to attend for anyone interested and can be attended in person or online.

Online registration is essential, and you can register here: <https://tinyurl.com/ycv23hrd>

Please see the current full programme below but please look out for new talks being added.

For further information, please contact the IHRR: [ihr.admin@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ihr.admin@durham.ac.uk)

Guest speaker: **Mike Winter**, Chartered Civil Engineer, ICE Fellow, Chartered Geologist and a UK Registered Ground Engineering Adviser

Date: 20th February 2023

Title: *Landslide Risk to Roads and Road Users*

Guest speaker: **Dr Carly Beckerman**, Executive Director, IHRR, and Associate Professor in the International Relations of the Middle East in the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University

Date: 6th March 2023

Title: *World Leaders Be Crazy: Deviant Behaviour in Global Politics*

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## New Taught Postgraduate Programmes in Climate, Hazards, Politics & Risk

Have you ever thought about doing a postgraduate qualification?

This year, we refreshed and launched our new suite of taught masters programmes, expanding from three to six programmes. All of our programmes develop students' skills in evaluating risk, data analysis, critical thinking and governing through uncertainty.

Our **MA and MSc in Climate, Risk and Society** gives students focussed training in social, political and physical processes of climate change. Job offerings in climate-related fields are growing quickly and we train students to make evidence-based decisions in complex situations.

Our **MA and MSc in Environmental Hazards and Risk** offer students technical and analytical skills in risk analysis, hazard prediction and social vulnerability. Environmental consultancy and modelling remain key employers of our graduates and promises to remain a growing field, as well.

Our **MA in Risk, Security and Politics** explores how risky environments and people are governed, strategies for fostering resilience, and implications for vulnerably groups and social inequality. We continue to have high placement rates in consultancy, security, insurance, the public sector and further postgraduate study.

Our **Masters in Research Methods** offers in-depth training in social science methodology and provides an excellent foundation for PhD research and professional research posts.

To find out more, visit: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/geography/postgraduate-study/>



## History of the Department

We spent three years creating 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 Department over the years. The work was led by Professor Ian Simmons – very well known to many of you – who compiled and gathered not only his own experiences and memories, but those of many other past members or staff and students. We are very grateful for all the contributions made to help create this history.

If you have not already taken the opportunity to look at this work, please do explore the document via the following link:

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



## Alumni Career Talks

Our Alumni Career Talks allow graduates of the department to come back and speak to current students and show them what they can do with their Geography degree. They also allow our alumni to show students how they have used their experiences at Durham to shape and direct their careers.

We cannot run these talks with you, our alumni, getting involved. They are of huge benefit to our students who get so much direction and positivity from listening to the achievements of our alumni.

Please do get in touch with us if you would like to get involved as we run these talks 3 times per academic year if possible and if we have the support from our alumni.

This year we returned to our face-to-face events in Durham, but for those who cannot get to Durham the possibility of a live Zoom feed to the assembled students is also an option.

You could also get involved by pre-recording your experiences on video and we can then show this to students at one of our talks as part of the event, so a great way to get involved even if you cannot make it on the day due to commitments or perhaps time differences around the globe.



Alumnus Becky Dell talking to students

## Stay in touch

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 how you can continue to be involved in the Department

- **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.
- **Alumni Lecture Series** – a series of online events giving an opportunity to hear one of our world renowned Durham academics speak about their research.
- **Student Employability Mentoring** – individual mentoring for students who need career advice.



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

## Contact Details

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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.