



The University of  
**Nottingham**

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# Geography@Nottingham

School of Geography newsletter 2017

## Geography students explore Mount St. Helens blast zone with the US Geological Survey



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### Course accreditation

Nottingham courses recognised by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

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### Festivities, fundraising and fun

GeogSoc kicks off the new academic year in style

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## Welcome to the School of Geography



Professor Giles Foody.

As part of one of the UK's leading Russell Group universities, the School of Geography is set in a highly interdisciplinary academic context. We focus on developing talent; producing graduates of an exceptionally high calibre at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Indeed, our graduates are among the best ambassadors for the work we do at Nottingham.

We offer a friendly and inspiring environment in which to learn and research, and our exciting, challenging courses are some of the most flexible in the country. Our range of modules is constantly evolving and spans the full spectrum of the discipline, from the arts and humanities, through the social and natural sciences to engineering and technology.

In order to ensure our offerings meet recognised standards and benchmarks, we work with relevant organisations such as the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), which selected our BA/BSc and MArts/MSci Geography courses to be among the first it formally accredited.

We use a variety of assessment methods and much of our research-led teaching is delivered through lectures, seminars and practical laboratory classes. The school also invests heavily in small-group teaching through tutorials and one of the first things new students do is meet their tutor, who offers pastoral support and advice throughout their studies.

Starting university can sometimes seem daunting: settling into a new home, making new friends and developing new ways of working can be a challenge. Our peer mentoring scheme offers new students the opportunity to meet with second and third year students, who can help with any questions they may have on our courses, policies and coursework. The student-run GeogSoc also provides support and a range of activities that help enhance the student experience (for more information, see page 6).

Fieldwork is an essential part of a geography degree and our students have the opportunity to explore inspirational destinations in the UK and overseas. Recent field courses have seen our students survey vegetation in Italy, reconstruct environmental change in Mexico and examine river processes in the USA (for more information, see page 4).

Whatever your ambitions, the School of Geography can help lay the foundation for a successful future. This newsletter will give you some insight into what studying with us is like and I hope that you will enjoy reading about our students' experiences. If you have any questions, please do get in touch (details on page 8).

### Professor Giles Foody

Head of School and Professor of Geographical Information Science

Cover image: geography students on a field trip to Mount St. Helens (find out more on page 4).

## The soundtrack to freshers' week

**Professor Andrew Leyshon conducts research into the musical economy. Here, he discusses the playlist he created from the freshers' week experiences of geography staff.**

A number of academic studies have suggested that the music that we listen to between the ages of 14 and 24 has particular emotional resonance, which tends to stick with us as we get older, even if we carry on listening to and enjoying new music.

This tendency is perhaps amplified with the music that new students listen to in their first weeks at university, as it is often associated with all the upheaval of moving to a different location, making friends and undertaking a wide range of new life experiences.

To mark the start of the 2016/17 academic year and to welcome our new students, I asked my academic colleagues a simple question: 'What song, from all those in the charts when you first went to university, would you choose to add to a playlist?'

I compiled the results into a Spotify playlist and they range in time from songs of the late 1960s to those of the mid-2000s, reflecting the ages of our staff and when they started their undergraduate degrees. These aren't necessarily the favourite tracks of my colleagues, but remind them of some of the concerns, excitement and challenges of that period of transition.

One of the reasons that musical tastes stabilise at 24 is, apparently, because hearing begins to deteriorate from there so the subtle differences in sonic landscapes become more difficult to identify.

If you're an undergraduate and want to avoid the early onset of the time when you will inevitably moan that all new music sounds the same – try to keep the speakers and headphones turned down to a reasonable level.

You can find the playlist on Spotify under Andrew's username: **gambo4279**



Research suggests that our taste in music stabilises at 24.

## Course accreditation

The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) has formally recognised a selection of UK undergraduate programmes as part of its new accreditation scheme, including four courses at Nottingham.



Providing students and employers with an assurance that the knowledge, skills and other attributes expected of high-quality geography graduates are being delivered, the accredited courses are measured against the QAA subject benchmark statement for geography.

Professor Joanna Bullard, Chair of the Accreditation Review Panel which assessed the applications, said: "The applications showcased

the quality of undergraduate programmes and the benefits for students, across the breadth of the subject. The departments delivering these programmes show great commitment to geographical education and to students."

Liz Tucker, the Chartered Geographer representative on the Panel, commented that graduates from these programmes would receive "a strong grounding in both core and specialist geographical knowledge, complemented by a wide range of skills of great value to employers."

The follow courses are accredited at Nottingham:

- BA Geography
- BSc Geography
- MArts Geography
- MSci Geography

Find out more: [www.nottingham.ac.uk/ugstudy/geography](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ugstudy/geography)

## Geographical Association launches Nottingham branch

**We recently marked the launch of the Nottingham branch of the Geographical Association, a joint venture between the School of Geography and the School of Education.**

In late 2016, they hosted their first lecture aimed at geography teachers and A level students. 'Picturing place: an exploration of the geographical imagination' was given by Stephen Daniels, Professor Emeritus of Cultural Geography. The event proved popular and attendees enjoyed the lecture itself as well as the opportunity to meet with other geography enthusiasts.

There will be two further lectures this academic year:

### Monday 6 March 2017

**You are here: geospatial technology in the public domain**  
Dr Gary Priestnall, School of Geography

Find out more and register:  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/geospatial](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/geospatial)

### Wednesday 17 May 2017

**Climate change: what's really happening and should we care?**  
Dr George Swann, School of Geography

Find out more and register:  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/climate](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/education/climate)

The School of Geography will also be represented at the Geographical Association's Annual Conference at the University of Surrey in April by Elaine Watts, the University's cartographer.

In addition, Mary Biddulph, Lecturer in Geographical Education, will present this year's presidential lecture for the Geographical Association on the theme 'inclusive geographies'.

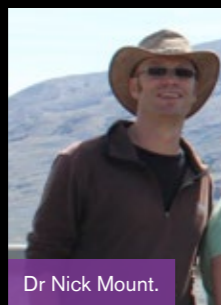
For further information on the Nottingham branch of the Geographical Association, please email [ga-notts@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ga-notts@nottingham.ac.uk)



A student collects data in the Mount St. Helens blast zone.

# Developing practical skills in a real-world laboratory

Dr Nick Mount is an expert in hydroinformatics and recently took a group of geography students on a two-week field trip to Mount St. Helens as part of our Practical River Management and Restoration module. Now back in the UK, he tells us more.



Dr Nick Mount.

### What makes Mount St. Helens interesting from a geography perspective?

Mount St. Helens is the world's best natural laboratory for studying severely disrupted rivers. The surrounding area was completely sterilised after the

volcano erupted in 1980 and it caused the largest landslide in human history. The river systems were fundamentally reset as a result and as life returns they are continuing to adjust to their new geomorphologic setting.

Members of the school have been working with colleagues from the US Geological Survey for more than 30 years. There are extensive data sets available for scientists to benefit from and the task of dealing with sediment from the eruption over

the next 50-100 years is still a pressing issue. How we manage this problem will affect the flood risk experienced by communities along the lower Columbia River as well as navigation.

### Tell us about the field trip.

As a school, and on a personal level, we have been observing Mount St. Helens for a long time, however 2016 saw us take our first group of students to the site. Our links with the US Geological Survey have enabled us to access the blast zone of Mount St. Helens and other restricted areas in order to get our students participating in the ongoing field monitoring programme. No other UK higher education institution currently benefits from such opportunities for its students.

Students were able to get first-hand experience in capturing data from the various devices that are being used to hold the sediment in place as it continues to shift.

We also explored lava tubes, visited the Wapato Mitigation Project, a major initiative focused on restoring areas of land and offsetting environmental issues elsewhere, and monitored the local beaver population and their habitat. As well as undertaking important work, we made sure we had fun with a barbeque on the Columbia River.

### How do students benefit from this trip?

Students may have already studied Mount St. Helens at school or college but this is an opportunity to really learn about managing the world at its most dynamic. It offers students the chance to contribute to world-class research by getting hands-on experience in a natural laboratory. The scale of the site is beyond what most people anticipate and there is nowhere in the UK or the world quite like it.

### How does it link to your research?

I'm interested in the space where hydrology meets informatics and data analysis. My background is in geography and my work centres on improving predictions about river flows and flooding. This involves using artificial intelligence methods and computer science as well as learning from the communities that are affected by these issues. Mount St. Helens is one of the best case studies for this type of modelling and it has been one of the highlights of my career to take students there and engage them with my research in the areas that I undertake it.

Find out more about our field trips:  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/geography/field-trips](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/geography/field-trips)

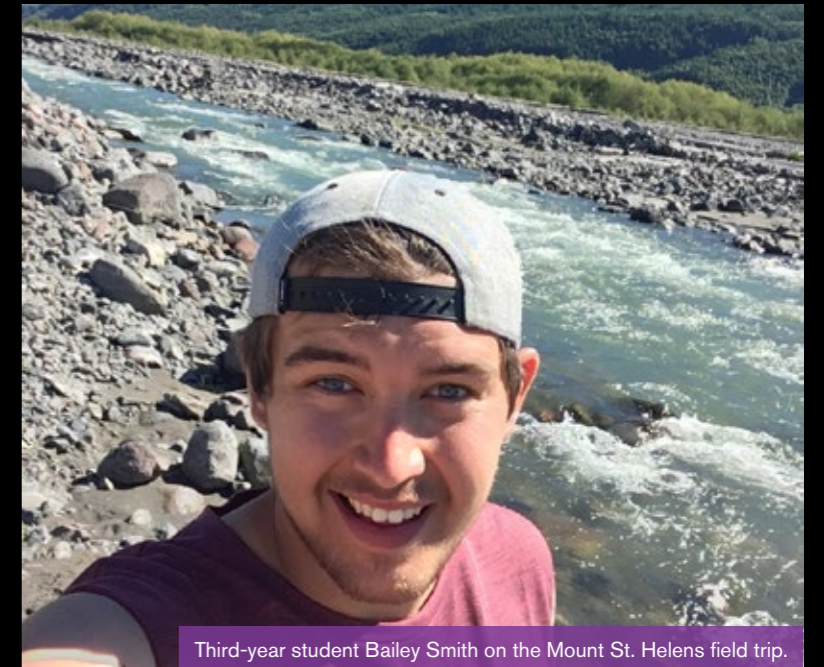


Accommodation on the field trip.



Geography students crossing the Columbia River, Washington.

# Life as a BSc Environmental Geoscience student



Third-year student Bailey Smith on the Mount St. Helens field trip.

Third-year student Bailey Smith tells us about his experiences on our BSc Environmental Geoscience course, which launched in 2014.

As one of the first BSc Environmental Geoscience students to enrol at Nottingham, I didn't know exactly what to expect. I chose the course because it appealed to my interests in physical geography and geology, and enabled me to specialise in those fields from my first year.

When I arrived, all the staff were really helpful, particularly Professor Paul Nathanael, Dr Matt Jones and Dr George Swann, who play a key role in the course. As well as taking part in lectures and tutorials with academics from the School of Geography, I have learnt so much from specialist staff at the British Geological Survey (BGS).

The strong link that the school has with the BGS is particularly beneficial for students such as myself, as we have been able to see some of the incredible work they do first hand and had the chance to visit and use their facilities and equipment.

One of the major highlights of my time at the University would be the field trips I have been on. Earlier this year, I spent two weeks working with the United States Geological Survey at Mount St. Helens (for more information, see page 4). Later this year, I will be undertaking a geological mapping project in Cyprus.

Many of my lectures are taken with BSc Geography students so it has been easy to make friends – I have even persuaded some of them to take environmental geoscience modules as part of their course. I'm also part of the GeogSoc committee and have been able to get involved in social, careers and charity events.

I would recommend the BSc Environmental Geoscience course to anyone with a keen interest in physical geography or geology. The career possibilities are endless and I'm planning to go into teaching next year. My course has given me the opportunity to study what I love, work alongside first-class academics and make so many friends – I've had the time of my life!

Find out more about our BSc Environmental Geoscience course:  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/ugstudy/geography](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/ugstudy/geography)

# Festivities, fundraising and fun with the Geography Society

The Geography Society at The University of Nottingham (or 'GeogSoc' for short) is for anyone and everyone interested in all things geographical. Founded in 1923, the student-run GeogSoc currently has more than 400 annual members who attend a wide area of social, academic, careers-based, charitable and sporting events throughout the year.

As I write this we are just about to enter the second semester and cross the half-way point for the academic year – and what a year it has been so far! We kicked it off with some welcome events for new students; the first being our legendary Crayola social which involves a group of geographers in white t-shirts, lots of colouring pens, silly games and a night of colouring in. It's a great way to get to know the people you'll be spending the next few years with.

Our second event was run as part of the Students' Union TryIt! initiative. Dubbed 'Notttopoly', it is loosely based on the family favourite board game Monopoly. We separated into small teams of students from across the year groups and ventured into the centre of Nottingham on a breezy Saturday morning. The teams had to complete as many challenges around the 'Notttopoly' board as possible within the time limit. After taking in lots of Nottingham landmarks, posing for photos and getting members of the public to do a dance routine, the winners were awarded a selection of prizes.

Now, I don't want you to think that all GeogSoc events are based on games or colouring pens. We offer lots of ways for our members to meet like-minded students and make friends throughout their time at Nottingham. One of our flagship schemes that has now been merged into the wider school is the peer mentoring scheme. It has been accredited for three years through the Nottingham Advantage Award, and aims to offer

A team of geography students take part in 'Notttopoly' in Nottingham city centre.



help and support to first year students making the transition from school to university. Every year we have had fantastic feedback and an overwhelming number of second and third years have volunteered to return the favour and become mentors for the incoming years, which I think really speaks volumes.

This year has also been the third of our GeogSoc initiative to widen participation in schools, where students spend time sharing their experiences with primary school children in order to encourage them to learn more about the wonderful (and sometimes weird) world of geography! We have also continued to support Share Uganda, a not-for-profit medical charity, through various events such as candy cane delivery services and bake sales. Later in the year, we are also working with SoupRunners to arrange a sleep out on campus to raise money to help fund their work with homeless people.

Our football and netball teams continue their strong campaigns in the Intramural Sport league. Work is firmly underway to finalise our new TedTalk-esque guest speaker event, which builds on previous successful lectures with world-renowned geographers, as well as a special event on Brexit and what it means for geography.

We have successfully elected our first ever Freshers' Secretary to ensure incoming first years are fairly represented on the committee. To top off a great term, we also had Christmas dinner at a restaurant in the city centre, which saw the appearance of some jolly Christmas jumpers as well as guest speakers from the school.

This term, we are arranging a trip to Prague for around 40 geography students, releasing tickets for our end of exams boat party down the River Trent, and will be planning the next round of our highly competitive annual student vs. staff pub quiz. We continue to organise an array of careers opportunities via our new corporate sponsor and will be topping the year off with our annual geography ball, 'Global!'

As President, it has been an honour to give back to a society that has defined my Nottingham experience. Of course, most of the heavy lifting is done by the rest of the committee, and I want to thank them dearly, alongside the School of Geography staff, as they continue to put in tremendous hours of hard work, alongside their degrees, their social lives and their sports teams even though they don't have to!

Finally, to our members – thank you for enjoying GeogSoc as much as we do and for your continued support and enthusiasm. Without you, we wouldn't be here.

**Max Rostron**  
GeogSoc President 2016/17

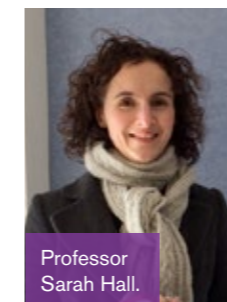


Members of the GeogSoc committee promote the society.

# Chinese finance comes to London



The Hong Kong Stock Exchange, which remains the dominant offshore RMB centre (the UK is now second).



Professor Sarah Hall.

**Professor Sarah Hall conducts research into the international financial system. Here, she discusses her latest work that examines the new forms of Chinese finance that are increasingly important for London's financial district.**

One of the most significant changes currently occurring within the international financial system is the growing internationalisation of money and finance from China. This reflects broader arguments that power in the global economy is shifting eastwards, away from North America and Europe. As a result the 21st century is often labelled the 'Chinese century'.

It is hard to underestimate the speed, scale and scope of Chinese financial internationalisation within this. In the early 2000s, the Chinese currency, the Renminbi (RMB), had virtually no international influence because, prior to 2004, trading denominated in RMB was not allowed outside of China.

Following the opening up of the Chinese economy, demonstrated most clearly by China's entry into the World Trade Organisation in 2001, China has subsequently initiated a series of policy changes that have increased the use of its currency on a global scale. Indeed, figures show that the RMB has risen to become the fifth most-used currency for international payments.

Understanding how the internationalisation of the RMB has occurred is a resolutely geographical question because it has taken place through a distinctive spatial formation. China has initiated a series of offshore RMB centres beyond mainland China to facilitate internationalisation of its currency. While Hong Kong and Singapore were the first such centres, London's financial district has developed into the first leading western offshore RMB centre.

Since early 2015, I have been undertaking a research fellowship funded by the British Academy to reveal how and why London has assumed this position. As part of this research, I have been fortunate enough to travel to Beijing in order to conduct interviews with Chinese financiers and policymakers as well as make new research collaborations with geography colleagues there.

I have also undertaken a series of interviews with Chinese financiers working in London. It has been fascinating to learn how they ended up working in London and their future career aspirations, and I am very grateful for the time they spent sharing their stories with me.

**“Understanding how the internationalisation of the RMB has occurred is a resolutely geographical question.”**

I'm currently using these research findings to write a series of academic papers and a new book that argues that political relations, as well as the more frequently studied economic relations, between London and China are central in explaining the development of London as an offshore RMB centre.

In 2017, I'll be sharing this research with students through my teaching on the third year module, Geographies of Money and Finance, as well as getting feedback from my academic colleagues at international conferences in the US and Europe.

**Sarah Hall**  
Professor of Economic Geography

Find out more about our research:  
[www.nottingham.ac.uk/geography/research](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/geography/research)

# Get a Q-Step ahead at Nottingham



## Q-Step Affiliate

Supporting a step-change in quantitative social science skills

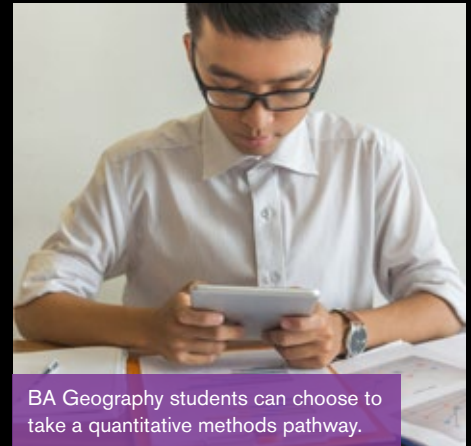
Nottingham is one of only 18 institutions in the UK to have been selected to participate in the Q-Step programme, a national initiative which recognises universities' commitment to developing students' quantitative expertise.

Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, the Economic and Social Research Council and HEFCE, Q-Step is designed to help provide the next generation of social scientists with the evaluative and analytical skills required to examine data.

The UK has a shortage of graduates with the ability to evaluate evidence, analyse data, and design and commission research. Yet these skills are increasingly in demand from employers across all sectors including government, business and charities.

Our BA Geography course includes an optional quantitative methods pathway as part of the school's Q-Step Affiliate status, which enhances graduates' employability and enables them to work towards a BA Geography with Quantitative Methods degree.

Find out more: [www.nottingham.ac.uk/q-step](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/q-step)



BA Geography students can choose to take a quantitative methods pathway.

## Summer internships

For many years, the School of Geography has been committed to working directly with students to enhance their career prospects. This translates into identifying and working on career-related opportunities with students and actively connecting them to professional careers advisors, brand ambassadors and employers.

First-year undergraduate students take a specialised module, Careers for Geographers, which helps them build the wide range of skills they need to secure interviews and employment. For the full student cohort, we arrange networking events and talks in collaboration with the University's Careers and Employability Service and GeogSoc.

In 2015, we launched a new summer internship scheme which provides opportunities for students to be placed with a variety of participating firms including those in the resource management, environmental science and consultancy fields. We aim to extend this scheme further in 2017 and are working to expand the number and range of participating firms on offer.

Find out more: [www.nottingham.ac.uk/geography/careers](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/geography/careers)



Networking events are available for all students.

## An epic journey

They are separated by more than 6,500 miles, and for most people a day's plane travel, yet a geography academic took a more unusual route between the UK and Malaysia.

Associate Professor Suzanne McGowan returned to Nottingham last year after a three-year secondment as Head of the School of Geography at the University's Malaysia Campus.

Instead of taking a plane she decided to make the journey using a network of 16 trains and three buses via South East Asia, China, Siberia, Russia and Europe.

Find out more about her travels: [notflying.wordpress.com](http://notflying.wordpress.com)

Read the school blog: [blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/geography](http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/geography)



Dr Suzanne McGowan on a stop at Lake Baikal, Russia.

### Get involved

[UoNGeography](https://www.facebook.com/UoNGeography)  
[@UoNGeography](https://www.instagram.com/UoNGeography)

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The University of Nottingham has made every effort to ensure that the information in this newsletter was accurate when published. Please note, however, that the nature of the content means that it is subject to change from time to time and you should therefore consider the information to be guiding rather than definitive.

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