

# The relevance of geographical knowledge for the challenges facing society: Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Medals and Awards ceremony 2015

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The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)'s annual Medals and Awards recognise achievements in researching, communicating and teaching a wide range of geographical knowledge. The speeches and citations are a record of the 2015 ceremony, with contributions from Paul Theroux, Professors Michael Batty, Stephen Daniels, Gill Valentine and Dr Jay Mistry. The speeches include comments on the importance of geography for understanding and tackling challenges facing society, urban modelling, travel, landscapes, and community led research.

KEY WORDS: geography, geographical knowledge, teaching and learning, fieldwork, disseminating research

## President's introduction

**Professor Dame Judith Rees:** Good evening and a very warm welcome to one of the most important events in the Society's calendar, the presentation of the Medals and Awards for 2015 and a celebration of the diverse contributions made by the recipients to geographical knowledge and a better understanding of the world around us. As most of you will be aware, this is the last year that I will have the honour and pleasure of presenting these awards. My period as President seems to have flown by and not just for me judging by an encounter I had with a Fellow just two weeks ago at the lecture by Sir Bob Geldof; she came up to congratulate me on taking over from Michael Palin and was somewhat taken aback to learn that three years had passed since then. This encounter served to remind me of Michael's words in his last Presidential address, 'Presidents come and go, but the continuity of the RGS-IBG is in the hands of everyone who works here'. I want to sincerely thank them all for making my Presidency a relatively stress-free and enjoyable experience. We have a great Society, one of the most vibrant geographical societies in the world. Its success owes much to the Director and her staff who have done an enormous amount to promote our subject and share geographical knowledge with new audiences. However, their achievements are only made possible by the support of literally hundreds of

people who give their time to the Society as Council and committee members, ambassadors, mentors, reviewers, assessors and sponsors – thanks to you all. It is appropriate that I am sharing the platform this evening with two of the Vice Presidents; I owe a special thank you to all the Vice Presidents and Treasurers who have served with me over the years – their support and wise advice has been greatly appreciated.

First will be the Medals, which I will present. Second will be the Scholarly Awards of the Society. These will be presented by Professor David Thomas, the Vice President for Research and Higher Education. The third group will be the awards celebrating education, wider public understanding of geography, and support for excellence in expeditions and fieldwork. These will be presented by Dr John Shears, the Vice President for Expeditions and Fieldwork.

These awards will be interspersed with short videos highlighting the photography of our Cherry Kearton Medal and Award recipient, the Society's grants, specifically the Land Rover Bursary, and the Ambassador programme.

At the end, the recipient of the Murchison Award, Professor Gill Valentine, will give a speech on behalf of all the Award recipients.

Before we begin, I would just like to thank the many staff who have helped to organise this event, and in particular Emma Neave and Alex Bishop in the Director's Office. I would also like to thank all those

who submitted nominations for the Medals and Awards.

Her Majesty the Queen has approved the awards of our two highest honours – the two Gold Medals of equal standing. This year the Founder's Medal is awarded to **Professor Michael Batty** and the Patron's Medal to **Paul Theroux**.

### Founder's Medal

First the Founder's Medal awarded to **Professor Michael Batty**.

Professor Michael Batty is one of the most influential geographers of his generation. Working at the interface of geography and planning, he has made enormous contributions to advancing human geography, developing methods and concepts for understanding cities.

Professor Batty has written hundreds of publications. His academic papers and books have set intellectual agendas for the discipline. His equally prolific, more general contributions have stimulated discussion, debate and awareness among wider audiences of how cities function. His latest book, *The new science of cities*, draws together much of this research. It is an intellectual tour de force; 'locational analysis' in a digital age.

Professor Batty's influence has also been felt strongly through institutes, which he has chaired and initiated, most notably the Center for Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA) at UCL, where he has been based for the last 20 years. CASA's work is at the cutting edge of innovations in information science and its application to the world of big data and smart cities.

Mike is a Fellow of both the British Academy and Royal Society, which places him in elite company; he has been awarded a CBE; and is recipient of the Vautrin Lud Prize, a leading international award for geographers.

It is most fitting that today Professor Michael Batty be awarded the Founder's Medal for the development and promotion of the geographical science of cities.

### *Professor Michael Batty's acceptance speech*

As a schoolboy in the 1950s in a northern grammar school, I did not know what to do at university. In fact I thought about architecture and geography, economics and maths but it was really the headmaster and my father who decided I should go to Manchester and do Town and Country Planning, sufficiently like Architecture but with a little more intellectual clout they said, and as I was good at drawing . . .

So that is what happened and when I got there in 1962, I found the place in turmoil – half the staff said planning was architecture, the other half said it was geography, and geography was beginning to win out. By the time I finished my degree, there were lots of people who were pushing the idea that planning should be a geographical or spatial science and as the

intellectual and professional confusion had by then accelerated, I sought refuge in what I thought was a more certain future: in thinking about planning and cities as science.

One great revelation to me was that you could think of cities as systems, as machines – and this systems approach suggested that if you could think this way, you could build formal models – mathematical models – which could be used to make predictions of what a future would be like. The other great revelation was that we could use computers to do this. Naïve perhaps to think we could invent the future this way but optimistic too.

We are all prisoners of the time when we are trained and in my own case I have continued this last 40 years or more to pursue these early aims. In the late 1960s and then at geography in University of Reading in the 1970s, I built various urban models that we still call land use transport models – large-scale, static, aggregative beasts tied together with wire and string – hardly science but a 'kind of science' nonetheless, drawing on bits and pieces from physics to sociology. My time at Reading under my mentor, the sadly departed Peter Hall – who also received this medal in 1988 – equipped me to move on to Cardiff where I was a Professor in the Planning School.

There in the 1980s, I was much influenced by computer graphics – and the beginning of GIS – geographical information systems which now constitute the basic elements of the way we represent the geographical world in our models. Tonight receiving an Award is David Martin who was a PhD student there developing this world of GIS and data, and he is still doing that. There I met Paul Longley, again a recipient here two years ago of the Victoria Medal, and we worked on new approaches to simulating cities from the bottom up. The great insight that has happened in science and social science this last 30 years is that things like cities and societies need to be thought about as systems which grow and evolve from the bottom up – more like organisms than machines – and our models are now much more infused with this than they once were – they draw extensively on complexity theory, on ideas such as emergence and evolution and in this quest Paul Longley and myself developed many ideas of representing the form and function of cities as fractals and similar emergent systems thinking.

I left Cardiff for the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1990 where I ran the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis for 5 years and where I cut new teeth on GIS and spatial analysis, and on trying to run a Centre, and then in 1995, it was Peter Hall as much as anyone but also Richard Munton, Peter Wood (who is receiving the Honorary Fellowship here tonight), Bill Hillier and Paul Densham who set up and have long supported the Centre I am now associated with at UCL – CASA. For the last 20 years I have been working on all of the

things I have noted: GIS, urban models, visualisation, and now new insights into cities as networks, cities not simply locations but networks of locations, a longstanding idea of course but one which is only now being aggressively developed.

During this time, a lot has changed – the idea of the computer as a universal machine is being illustrated daily as computers are becoming embedded in cities, even embedded in ourselves, which will be the next frontier of computing. Our present concerns are with these ideas which in particular are giving us new data about the world – big data – and this is providing us with a new sense of how cities are changing through time. Space is being enriched by new notions about time – geography is being enriched with history.

In all of this, cities and computers have become more important in the popular conception than I ever imagined they would be when I began in the 1960s.

Let me finish by thanking those who sponsored me for this Award, Kelvyn Jones I know, and Richard Harris, and also Alan Wilson, Nigel Thrift and Neil Wrigley, I think, all of them past recipients of Society Awards. I thank them all for this and for supporting my work, which after a long period in the 1970s and 1980s when it was rather unpopular, has come back, almost with a vengeance in the form of big data, smart cities and such like.

Thank you.

### Patron's Medal

**Judith Rees:** The Patron's Medal and the Founder's Medal are of equal standing, and both are approved by Her Majesty The Queen.

This year the Patron's Medal is awarded to **Paul Theroux** in recognition of his contribution to geographical discovery through travel writing.

Paul Theroux is one of the world's leading and most inspirational travel writers. Following his role as a Peace Corp volunteer in Malawi, and a period as a teacher in Uganda and Singapore, he published *The Great Railway Bazaar*, a book that established his reputation and captured the imagination of its readers.

Since then, there have been numerous books, of travel and fiction, all of which over a period of 40 years have provided millions of people worldwide with great insights into the cultures and peoples of the world through his own, often epic, journeys across continents. They have also, quoting from his own words in the *Tao of Travel*, served to instil:

the wish to travel: the desire to move, to satisfy your own curiosity or ease your fears, to change the circumstances of your life, to be a stranger, to make a friend, to experience an exotic landscape, to risk the unknown.

A Fellow of this Society and the Royal Society of Literature, Paul Theroux has been recognised by many institutions, and his books have received numerous prizes including the prestigious Whitbread Award. He

has inspired generations of both travellers and travel writers.

We are particularly pleased that Paul Theroux is here this evening and it is my pleasure to invite him to receive the Patron's Medal.

### Paul Theroux's acceptance speech

Reading inspired me to become a traveller, travelling gave me something to write about. My childhood ambition was to leave home for a single-minded encounter with the world. I greatly admire the dedication and bravery of the members of the Royal Geographical Society; compared with them I feel my travel has been impulsive and improvisational. But it allowed me to discover what I was capable of and to make my life.

More than 50 years ago at the beginning of the turbulent 1960s, I went to Central Africa and stayed, teaching and travelling, for six years. To be effective I needed to learn the language ('Kulendo ndi kuvina' the villagers said – 'To travel is to dance'). I also had to acquire the practical skills of map reading, camping, and especially of getting along with strangers, since so much of travel involves negotiating with – and befriending – other people.

Throughout my life my heroes have been explorers, adventurers, discoverers, risking their lives, to be the first to describe what has been unattainable or lain in obscurity; to give features to the face of the unknown.

It is a particular satisfaction to me, in accepting this Award, to reflect that the extensive roll-call of its recipients is distinguished by three qualities – courage in the worst conditions, curiosity about the world, and the ability to write well.

Take that last item. Consider how daunting, even harrowing, it is for someone to find himself in a hostile region, or a howling desert, or an ocean, or on a mountain, a frozen shore, or an Antarctic ice shelf; and then reflect on what the men who have experienced these ordeals have given us: *In darkest Africa*, *Arabia Deserta*, *Arabian Sands*, *Kon Tiki*, *The Conquest of Everest*, *Arctic Observations*, and *Alone*: Stanley, Doughty, Thesiger, Heyerdahl, Hunt, Elisha Kane, and Admiral Byrd. And I might add that each of these men have been awarded the Patron's Medal.

It is one thing to make an arduous journey, it is quite another to recount it with such felicity and vividness that it becomes an enchantment. These men have succeeded in that, and I should say that most of those who have distinguished themselves as explorers in this Society can count themselves as authors of achievement, their books an enduring testament to observation and description; more than survive the trip they triumphed in it and returned to tell its story.

I think this is so – that such travellers are especially clear-headed and well read – because travel is much more than a physical challenge. Stamina matters, but if stamina alone were the deciding factor, then a star

footballer would be a candidate for bushwhacking – and that is not the case. Travel is not a question of being a he-man; it is much more a mental and intellectual challenge, because it is an encounter with strangeness, and often darkness and uncertainty. In *The Worst Journey in the World*, Apsley Cherry-Garrard wrote, 'Exploration is the physical expression of the Intellectual Passion'. That book is not only one of the greatest accounts of an expedition, but it is to my mind a literary masterpiece as well.

We live in the know-it-all, and arrogant, and impatient age of the internet. Technology pretends to be friendly to the traveller, but I believe it is often a tease, and can be misleading, to the person who wishes to make his or her own discoveries, at first hand, in the old slow laborious way. The best travel, like the best writing, is a slog and solitary, and is at last an enlightenment, an inspiration, and a joy.

I feel especially privileged today, standing before you, to think that my travel has led me here.

### Medals awarded by the Society's Council

**Judith Rees:** We now turn to the Victoria Medal, Busk Medal and Cherry Kearton Medal and Award, presented by the Society's Council.

#### *Victoria Medal*

**Professor Stephen Daniels** is this year's recipient of the Victoria Medal. He is recognised as a world-leading figure in cultural and historical geography, and the UK's premier geographical interpreter of landscapes and culture.

Professor Daniel's innovative work has been extraordinarily influential in the humanities, as well as in geography. Through authoritative texts, he has led the way in demonstrating how geographical scholarship can illuminate understanding of painted and mapped representations of space and place; how art shapes nations; and the critical importance of the geographical imagination. His work has contributed to a series of major exhibitions in such venues as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Ulster Museum, the Tate, the National Galleries of Scotland and the Royal Academy.

Professor Daniels has also been a champion for geography nationally and internationally. Between 2005 and 2010 he was Director of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Landscape and Environment Programme, giving impetus to important new research on human engagement with the landscape, and landscape and climate.

I am very pleased to invite Professor Stephen Daniels to receive the Victoria Medal for conspicuous merit in human geography.

#### *Professor Stephen Daniel's acceptance speech*

This is a great honour, for me personally and for cultural geography.

The Victoria Medal has a distinguished roll call of recipients – the last in cultural geography, the eminent Carl O Sauer, received his in 1975, when I was starting my career.

Cultural geography for me is an integral part of geography as a whole – in my work, in its concern with landscape and imagery, opening up to the wider world of the arts and humanities, exploring geographical imagination.

The images just shown charting career landmarks are of a selection of books, their illustrated covers. They show that what matters, as much as *what* I have achieved, is *with whom* I have achieved it. For my research career, from single author to programme director has been a collaborative one, with a strong sense of companionship. The University of Nottingham, where I have spent much of my career, has proved a convivial and creative environment.

*The Iconography of Landscape* (1988) reflects a decisive partnership with my friend and co-editor, the late Denis Cosgrove, when he was working at Loughborough University.

*Humphry Repton: Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England* (1999) is dedicated to my wife Christine, a cartographer, who lived for so long with this historical character in my life and got to know many of his landscapes.

The 2009 exhibition *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain* (staged in Nottingham, Edinburgh and the Royal Academy London) brought this Nottingham born artist to national attention, for the political as well as pictorial impulse of his vision. It is part of a series of shows curated with art historians, including Nottingham colleague Nicholas Alfrey.

The co-edited collections *Exploring Human Geography* (1995) and *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds* (2011) bring together a transatlantic community of scholars to make humanities concerns central to human geography.

*Landscapes of the National Trust* (forthcoming), co-authored with Ben Cowell and Luch Veale, is the outcome of a key institutional partnership in the AHRC Landscape and Environment programme I directed. With commissioned photography by Simon Roberts, it shows how both real and imagined landscapes matter for understanding relations of people and place, and larger questions of identity and belonging.

For me this Society, has always proved a place of identity and belonging, and it is a great pleasure to receive this Award in the company of colleagues, family and friends.

#### *Busk Medal*

**Judith Rees: Dr Jayalaxshmi Mistry** is recognised with the Busk Medal for policy-relevant, conservation-related research in the global South.

Dr Jay Mistry's research on ecology and conservation, primarily in South America, is both

world leading and has played a very important role in informing policymakers at local, national and international levels. Successful environmental conservation requires input from both natural and social sciences; Jay's work is genuinely placed at this interface between the two.

Jay's work is also based on long-term, genuinely collaborative partnerships with indigenous communities, especially in Guyana, and with NGOs and universities more widely in the global South. She has worked with local communities and their institutions in the rainforests of Brazil and the Guiana Shield, always championing research that empowers indigenous communities to develop and share community understanding of environmental processes, and human responses and adaptation to climate change.

It is my pleasure to invite Dr Jayalaxshmi Mistry to receive the Busk Medal

#### *Dr Jay Mistry's acceptance speech*

In accepting this Award, I would like to suggest that there are three basic ways of doing research in the global South. The first is to carry out research that proposes your solutions for particular problems that you have identified. The second is to work together with those directly affected by a problem to arrive at a solution. And the final approach is to empower those affected by a problem with the ability to identify and share their own solutions. It is this empowering research which I champion and which has characterised the work of many individuals who have received this Award before me.

Many conservation and natural resource management issues are context specific, seldom affected by passing policy fads. Local problems are also rarely solved by generic prescriptions from Western experts. Managing the whole system through linked human and non-human relationships, rather than trying to reduce everything that matters to a single economic value, as is the current obsession, is not only socially just but also has a better chance of working in the long term.

The overriding lesson I have learnt after more than 20 years of community-based research is that the most effective high-impact research is that led by the communities themselves, where we, as academics, help build the capacities of individuals in undertaking the research that they want and need. It therefore leaves me to thank all the people that have accepted my attempts to support their research efforts: the communities of the North Rupununi, Guyana, and the Brazilian *cerrado*. Amongst the many amazing local Indigenous research champions, I would like to specifically name Lakeram Haynes, Grace Albert, Rebecca Xavier, Ryan Benjamin, and Bernie Robertson, who have demonstrated the enthusiasm, patience and perseverance at the heart of truly

participatory, and bottom-up community-based research. Thank you!

#### *Cherry Kearton Medal and Award*

**Judith Rees:** The Cherry Kearton Medal and Award is presented to **Sebastião Salgado** for excellence in Amazonian photography as a record of natural history.

Sebastião Salgado is a renowned Brazilian social documentary photographer and photojournalist. He is internationally recognised for his work that ranges from documenting the extreme hardship of labour workers in the mining and coffee industries, to majestic images of the natural world, illustrating issues relating to conservation and international education.

He has travelled to more than 100 countries for his photographic projects and is author of many critically acclaimed books, including *Other Americas*, *Sahel: The End of the Road*, *Workers: An Archaeology of the Industrial Age*, *Migrations: Humanity in Transition*. In 1994 he co-founded, with Lelia Wanick Salgado, the Paris-based production agency, *Amazonas Images*, dedicated solely to his work. Between 2004 and 2011, he worked on *Genesis*, a photographic homage to our planet and its natural state.

Mr Salgado cannot be with us this evening. His Award will be accepted on his behalf by Neil Burgess, after which some of his extraordinary images will be shown.

On behalf of Sebastião Salgado, Neil Burgess kindly presented the President a copy of Mr Salgado's latest book, *Genesis*, for the Society's library.

#### **Awards of the Society as recommended by Council**

##### *Scholarly Awards*

**David Thomas:** We now come to the four scholarly Awards of the Society as recommended by the Society's Council. This year's recipient of the Murchison Award for publications, **Professor Gill Valentine**, is judged to have contributed most to the understanding of the geography of difference, equality and diversity.

Professor Gill Valentine has an outstanding record of publications – in terms of number and impact. Her research has encouraged geographers to explore the challenges of living with difference in an era of super-mobility and super-diversity. Much of her research has focused on those who, in certain sites and situations, may suffer marginalisation. This has included research and publications on prejudice; on class, gender, sexuality, refugees, disability; and on faith networks. These publications have changed the shape, focus and possibilities of geographical research in the UK and internationally, and, significantly, the social sciences more generally.

It is with great pleasure that I ask Professor Gill Valentine to receive the Murchison Award.

The Murchison Award is one of the most senior Awards, and Professor Valentine will return to the stage at the end of the ceremony to speak on behalf of all the Award recipients.

The **Back Award** is presented to **Professor David Martin** for his research influencing policy with respect to the census and its applications.

Professor David Martin's research on the geographies of population statistics has underpinned an immense, and ongoing, contribution to public policy and practice. The techniques David developed, now used by the Office of National Statistics, represented a revolutionary change in the definition of the spatial units used for census data. Data based on these units are fundamental to census and neighbourhood statistics, underpin indices of multiple deprivation and geodemographic classifications, and inform decisionmaking in commercial and public sectors. David has also championed the importance of these small area statistics and was instrumental in leading the successful campaign for their retention in the Census of 2021.

I now ask Professor David Martin to come to the stage and receive his Award.

The **Cuthbert Peek Award** for advancing geographical knowledge of human impact through earth observation is awarded to **Professor Heiko Balzter**.

Professor Balzter is a highly respected scientist whose research focuses on remote sensing of forest structure and dynamics, land-atmosphere interactions, and the role of fire in biogeochemical processes. Holder of a Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award, and leader of numerous NERC and EU grants, his research has helped to inform major international programmes, such as the European Space Agency's BIOMASS mission. This new radar satellite mission will help understanding of the terrestrial carbon cycle, with considerable potential impacts on human health and well-being. His work is innovative and of the highest quality, yielding new insights into how humans and climate change impact the Earth.

It is my pleasure to ask Professor Heiko Balzter to come to the stage and receive his Award.

The **Gill Memorial Award** for potential shown by an early career researcher in studies on urban geography is awarded to **Dr Charlotte Lemanski**.

Dr Charlotte Lemanski's work centres on urban change, theory and intervention, with a focus on cities in South Africa and India. An impressive array of publications, which are widely read and cited, demonstrate an innovative approach to the understanding of social inequality and the significant challenges to conceptualisations of urban experience drawn from North America and Europe.

Charlotte is highly valued for her generosity as a colleague; also as an inspiring teacher, supportive of

students and colleagues alike, within and beyond the UK.

I am delighted to present Dr Charlotte Lemanski with the Gill Memorial Award.

Each year the Society supports more than 60 field projects and expeditions across the world, developing new knowledge and advancing geographical science. We will now have a short interlude to hear more about one of those grants, the Land Rover Bursary.

#### *Awards for teaching and engaging the public*

**John Shears:** Good evening. I am John Shears, the Vice President for Expeditions and Fieldwork.

I have the great pleasure of presenting the Awards that celebrate excellence in the public understanding of geography, in teaching and learning, and in those supporting expeditions and fieldwork.

The **Ness Award** for popularising geography is awarded to **Dr Robert Macfarlane**.

Dr Robert Macfarlane is one of Britain's pre-eminent writers on landscape, place and travel. His first book, the highly acclaimed *Mountains of the Mind: a History of a Fascination*, considers the Western love affair with mountains and was recognised with Awards from *The Guardian*, *Sunday Times*, and the Somerset Maugham Award. *The Wild Places*, a travelogue exploring the histories of landscapes of 'the wild' in Britain and Ireland, which followed, brought him more recognition and prizes. *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* completed a trilogy of works about landscape and the imagination. His most recent book, *Landmarks*, celebrates and defends the language of landscape.

Dr Macfarlane is widely recognised for his role in encouraging new critical and popular interest in writing about landscape. I am delighted to invite Dr Robert Macfarlane to accept his Award.

The **Geographical Award** is awarded to **Alain Hubert** for furthering the understanding of polar scientific research in Antarctica through expeditions.

Alain Hubert is a polar explorer, civil engineer, entrepreneur, Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF, mountaineer, and co-founder and Chairman of the International Polar Foundation.

He is being recognised for his outstanding leadership of polar expeditions, particularly to Antarctica with the Belgian Antarctic Research Programme. He has also been intimately involved in the design, building and operation of the Belgian Antarctic research station, 'Princess Elizabeth'. The station is the first zero carbon emission station on the continent and has pioneered the use of renewable energy systems in polar regions. Without Alain's vision, drive and commitment to polar science and expeditions, this station would never have been built. Alain has led pioneering education and outreach work through the setting up and operation of the International Polar Foundation, which raises

awareness across the world of the importance of polar science and environmental change.

I am particularly pleased to invite Alain Hubert to accept his Award.

I would like to invite **John Carpenter**, Director of Strategy at the Ordnance Survey, to present this year's two **Ordnance Survey Awards**.

**John Carpenter:** The two **Ordnance Survey Awards** are presented to **Raphael Heath** and **Andrew Emms** for excellence in geography education at secondary level.

**Andrew Emms** is recognised as an outstanding classroom teacher who has student ambitions and concerns at heart, and for his inspiration to the next generation of geography teachers through his work with the Prince's Trust Institute. Andy is aspirational and reflective; his success in instilling these traits in his students is evidenced by the significant uptake in the numbers studying geography at Altrincham Grammar School for Girls, where he teaches, and how many of those students subsequently study geography at university. He is active in the Geographical Association, and plays a leading role across 42 local schools in delivering outstanding extra-curricular experiences in geography.

**Raphael Heath** is a passionate and innovative geographer. As an early adopter of new web-based GIS technology, he has delivered an exciting and modern geography experience for his students at The Royal High School Bath. He has also run several training workshops for fellow teachers and was a driving force in a recent, global mapping initiative for school children during Geography Awareness week. Over 12 000 students mapped data about their local area onto a common map that was shared by all. As well as engaging with his peers in the teaching profession, Raphael has also been a critical friend to the GIS industry, helping to tease out the learning points and curriculum relevance that the new GIS technology has to offer.

I welcome Raphael Heath and Andrew Emms to receive this year's Ordnance Survey Awards for excellence in geography education at secondary level.

**John Shears:** The **Taylor and Francis Award** is presented to **Professor David Lambert** for leadership in the profession and practice of teaching geography.

Professor David Lambert is an outstanding geography educator, recognised today for his contributions to the development of pedagogy, to his championing of the importance of knowledge, and in training and inspiring generations of geography teachers through their postgraduate teacher qualifications. A school teacher himself by background, David is unique in being the only Professor of Geography Education in the UK. He has not only published widely but also continually challenges teachers to think about geography and their teaching from different perspectives. Through

leadership roles at the Institute of Education and the Geographical Association, David has also contributed more widely to education policy and to championing the importance of geography at school.

I am very pleased to invite Professor David Lambert to accept his Award.

The **Area prize**, awarded with our academic publishing partners Wiley, for the best paper published in the journal by an early career researcher, has been awarded to **Dr Rory Horner**, of the University of Manchester, for his paper 'Postgraduate encounters with sub-disciplinary divides: entering the economic/development geography trading zone'.

I invite Dr Rory Horner to come to the stage to receive the *Area* prize.

This year the recipient of the **Alfred Steers Dissertation Prize** for the best undergraduate dissertation submitted for a first geography degree is **Christine McKenna**, from the University of St Andrews. Her study was entitled 'A reconstruction of water mass distributions in the Faroe-Shetland Channel using Parametric Optimum Multi-Parameter Analysis'.

I welcome Christine McKenna to accept her Award.

As I leave the stage, the last of the video-clips this evening will profile the Society's Ambassador programme which reaches out to 30,000 school pupils each year in their classrooms, through some 600 active young Ambassadors.

**Judith Rees:** The last two awards are those of **Honorary Fellowship** of the Society. These are awarded in recognition of outstanding service to the Society and/or to the discipline of geography.

This year we have two recipients of **Honorary Fellowship**, **Professor Ken Gregory** and **Professor Peter Wood**, both recognised for their contributions to the Chartered Geographer accreditation. This is awarded by the Society to recognise professionals using their geographical skills and knowledge in the workplace.

Both eminent researchers, Professor Gregory and Professor Wood were among the first geographers to be accredited in 2002, when Chartered Geography was first launched. Since then both have served on the Final Assessors Committee, Professor Gregory as Chair. The Final Assessors, a group of six, provide oversight and strategic guidance of the accreditation. They also rigorously review all cases; more than 600 to date. Both Ken and Peter have given their advice and time most generously, and this has been fundamental to the scheme which is thriving today. It is the foundational pillar of the Society's work with professional geographers in government, business, education and third sector organisations, upon which other initiatives are now developing.

I would like to welcome **Professor Ken Gregory** and **Professor Peter Wood** to the stage to be formally awarded their Honorary Fellowships.

It is with great pleasure that I now ask **Professor Gill Valentine** to return to the stage and to respond on behalf of all the Award winners.

*Professor Gill Valentine's acceptance speech*

President, Director, colleagues, and guests I am very honoured to have the opportunity to thank the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) on behalf of all of those who have received an Award today.

A key mission of the Society is to promote the relevance of geographical knowledge for the challenges facing society. This is readily demonstrated by the profile of my fellow winners. David Martin's research on population statistics has had an impact on policy at the highest levels, including influencing the Government's decision to retain the Census in 2021. The prominent physical geographer Heiko Balzter has made a significant contribution to understanding climate change. His agenda to raise awareness of environmental change is also shared by Alain Hubert, who has pioneered scientific and educational work to understand and protect Antarctica.

The desire to make a difference in the world is not only the domain of academics and scientific leaders but is also shared by writers and photographers. Sebastião Salgado's images, for example, documenting the hardship of labourers in diverse industries, and Robert MacFarlane's thoughtful travelogues and articles, contribute to bringing social and environmental concerns to the attention of wider public audiences.

But perhaps the most powerful way to change the world is through education. Here the Society plays a critical role promoting the teaching and learning of geography. Today, we recognise the passion and commitment of teachers at all levels: David Lambert for his influential contribution to higher education and as Chief Executive of the Geographical Association; Andrew Emms for inspiring and empowering a new generation of young geography teachers; and Raphael Heath for integrating new technologies into the classroom for school children.

Today's Awards are also a testament to the enduring value of geographers. At one end of the generational spectrum we are celebrating the award of Honorary Fellowships to two eminent scholars, Peter Wood and Ken Gregory, for their lifetime contributions to the

discipline and to the Society itself. At the other end of the spectrum, we are also recognising the emergence of new talent typified by Christine McKenna's dissertation prize; Rory Horner's Area prize; and Charlotte Lemanski as recipient of the Gill Memorial Award for early career scholarship.

Nearly two decades ago, like Charlotte, I too was a recipient of the Gill Memorial Award for my work on geographies of gender and sexuality. At the time, this was just emerging as a new and controversial field of geographical enquiry. I believe this recognition from the Society helped to legitimise it as a valid topic of research while also providing an important springboard for my own career. Since then, my research has moved beyond this specific focus to consider the wider challenges of living with difference in an era of super-mobility and super-diversity. I am very grateful to the Society for helping to create the space for the pursuit of such agendas.

Finally, this would not be a proper acceptance speech without the Oscar tradition of a list of 'thank yous' to everyone who knows us. In the interests of brevity, I will summarise this on behalf of all of the winners as follows: huge thanks go to our families and friends who love and support us; to our colleagues and peers who stretch and challenge us; to those who taught us and inspired us to become geographers, and to those whom we teach and who continue to motivate us.

The work recognised today varies widely in its content, approach, methodology and outputs. Yet what all the winners share is a commitment to the relevance of geography to our changing world. On behalf of us all – thank you to the Society for supporting and promoting our endeavours, and for rewarding us for pursuing them.

**Judith Rees:** To conclude this event, I would like to add my own personal congratulations to all the recipients of the Society Medals and Awards for 2015. May I also take this opportunity to wish our next President, Nick Crane, the best of luck and I hope that he will enjoy his time as much as I have.

For those of you with tickets for the reception, please proceed through to the ambulatory. I look forward to seeing you there. I wish you all a very pleasant evening and thank-you again for joining us.