



Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Medals and Awards celebration 2018

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The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) 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 2018 celebration, with contributions from Professors Wendy Larner, Mark Macklin, Yadvinder Malhi, Bhaskar Vira, and Paul Rose. The speeches include comments on: the importance of geography for solving the most pressing of societal challenges; inspiring others through teaching, public engagement and leadership; interdisciplinarity and the pursuit of common intellectual agendas; fostering environmentally, economically and socially just futures; interconnections and exploration of the ecological world; and the value of field science.

KEYWORDS

expeditions and field science, geography, policy, public engagement and leadership, research, teaching and learning

1 | PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Nicholas Crane: Welcome to the RGS-IBG Medals and Awards celebration 2018. This is when we recognise those who have made a real difference to the world of geography; those who have furthered the *science* of geography; those who have deployed their energy, intellect and their *passion* to *extraordinary* effect. Those who are a beacon to younger geographers, many of whom pass through these doors every day. Those who are a beacon to *all* of us.

We will start with recognition of Honorary Fellowships and Prizes, then the Awards of the Society, and finally the Society Medals, ending with the Gold Medals approved by Her Majesty The Queen.

As is our custom, Professor Mark Macklin, recipient of the Murchison Award, will give a speech on behalf of all those recognised with Awards, Prizes and Honorary Fellowships. The presentation of the Busk, Victoria and Gold Medals will each be accompanied by a short speech from their recipients.

We will intersperse the proceedings with short videos highlighting the UK regional tour of the Enduring Eye exhibition and the associated Heritage Lottery funded project that has been unearthing the connections between local people and the Endurance expedition; my own highlights from the recent Monday night lecture series and my thoughts on how the Society's new website makes them easily accessible to all Fellows and members; and, finally, a compilation of images of the work of this year's Cherry Kearton Medal and Award recipient, Andy Goldsworthy.

Events like this do not just happen. So before we begin, I would like to recognise the many staff who have helped to organise this event, and to thank in particular: Emily Hampton-Matthews and Grace Matthews in the Director's Office; Adarsh Muppene and Alfredo Radetich for technical assistance in enabling some of our recipients to join from a distance; the Medals and Awards Committee members; and those who judged the Alfred Steers and *Area* Prize, for their

deliberations on tonight's awards. I would also like to recognise those who took the initiative and time to submit and support nominations. Without nominations, we do not have this extraordinary event.

2 | HONORARY FELLOWSHIPS

To begin the proceedings, we will award four *Honorary Fellowships* of the Society.

The Society's work is greatly aided by the commitment of some 3,000 volunteers each year. We thank all of them very warmly indeed for generously sharing their expertise, time, enthusiasm and for their financial support.

This evening we recognise four individuals with Honorary Fellowships of the Society. Our Honorary Fellowships are given to mark exceptional contributions to, or support for, the Society or geography, or indeed both, over a sustained period of time. Those contributions can take many forms, as we see in the awards this year.

First, we recognise *Paul and Mary Slawson*, long-term Fellows and very generous supporters of the Society. For more than 15 years, they have been benefactors of the Slawson Awards, providing funding for PhD students to undertake field-based research on development issues with a high social and economic value. To date, more than 50 such awards have been given, benefiting students from institutions across the UK, to undertake research in Asia, Africa and South America, on topics ranging from food and energy security, to resource governance, to refugee protection, to land tenure. Paul and Mary do much more than provide the funds for the research. They share their own knowledge and experience of development issues and their personal contacts; they open their home for networking events for current and past scholars; and they visit recipients in the field across the world, encouraging and challenging them on the implications of the work they are undertaking. The lives of all those supported have been changed and new understanding about the world has been gathered and shared, influencing local and national policies and the operations and effectiveness of development organisations.

I am delighted to welcome Paul Slawson to the stage to receive these two Honorary Fellowships. We send our very best wishes to Mary, who we hope is watching this ceremony at home in California through a live feed enabled by our great technical team here tonight.

Next, we recognise *Andrew Linnell*. Over the last decade, Andrew Linnell has played a very significant role in the governance of the Society. He has served as Vice President for Education, member of the Executive Committee and as chair of the Chartered Geographer Final Assessors. In all, he has been an exemplary chair – thoughtful, strategic and inclusive. His advice and insights have been particularly instrumental in the growth and impact of the Society's work in schools. Furthermore, Andrew has been the Society's chosen nominee as Secretary of the Council for British Geography. Andrew is recognised today for this commitment, his insights and advice, and his generosity of time and expertise to the Society and to geography.

I am delighted to welcome Andrew Linnell to the stage to receive his Honorary Fellowship.

And the final recipient of an Honorary Fellowship is *Peter Davies*. Substantial new developments in the Society's work often require the funding of major projects to plan, develop, deliver and evaluate that new work. Since 2010, the Society's work in engaging new audiences – specifically young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and wider public audiences – with, and through, geography has benefited enormously from the enthusiasm and thoughtful intellectual challenge, backed up by substantial philanthropic funding, from Peter Davies. Over the past decade, Peter has enabled the Society to deliver two of its most important and successful programmes: the Learning and Leading programme (2007–2015), which enabled the Society to inspire hundreds of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds through fieldwork; and the Britain from the Air exhibition and the Discovering Britain walks programme, which together have engaged many millions of people in exploring and understanding the changes that have shaped Britain and its landscapes – from the extraordinary, to everyday places and environments. Peter's input to the development of these initiatives, his thoughts and his questions, has also fundamentally shaped these programmes to ensure they genuinely reach the communities they are intended to and deliver sustained impact.

Unfortunately, Peter Davies is not able to be here this evening to receive his Honorary Fellowship.

3 | PRIZES

We now award two prizes for outstanding individual pieces of work.

3.1 | Alfred Steers Dissertation Prize

This year the recipient of the *Alfred Steers Dissertation Prize* for the best undergraduate dissertation submitted for a first geography degree is *Natasha Wallum*, from the University of Southampton, for her study “Modelling the effects of climate change and sea-level rise on complex soft cliff coastlines”. Natasha's study was commended by the judges as an “elegant study that develops a practical and valuable tool for coastal management and land-use planning”.

I warmly welcome Natasha Wallum to accept her prize.

3.2 | Area Prize

The *Area Prize*, awarded with our academic publishing partner Wiley, for the best paper published in the journal by an early career researcher, has, this year, been awarded to *Dr Junxi Qian*, from the University of Hong Kong, for the paper “Dilemma of modernity: interrogating cross-border ethnic identities at China's southwest frontier”. The *Area* Editors, who selected this paper, commented that it is “beautifully illustrated with qualitative material taken from in-depth interviews and detailed work in border communities, which challenges received wisdom around questions of assimilation and modernity”.

Unfortunately, Dr Junxi Qian cannot be with us to accept his award today.

4 | THE ENDURING EYE EXHIBITION: A VIDEO INTERLUDE

We will now see the first of our three video interludes, an interview with Alasdair Macleod, Head of Enterprises and Resources at the Society, describing the UK regional tour of the Enduring Eye exhibition and the associated Heritage Lottery funded project that has been unearthing the connections between local people and the Endurance expedition.

5 | AWARDS FOR TEACHING AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

It is now time for the Society's Awards, starting with those for teaching and public engagement.

5.1 | Taylor and Francis Award

The *Taylor and Francis Award* this year is presented to *Professor Helen Walkington* for her sustained contributions to teaching and learning in higher education.

Professor Helen Walkington is an innovative teacher and researcher, whose commitment is underpinned by a belief in the transformative nature of education. She inspires others across the UK and beyond by demonstrating the clear link between pedagogic research, learning and teaching quality enhancement. For example, first, she has created and sustained communities of practice at national and international levels: during her tenure as the Higher Education Academy discipline lead, she was widely recognised for her support of the Geography, Earth and Environmental Science community. She is also coordinator of the International Network for Learning and Teaching in Geography in Higher Education. Second, Helen has transformed the ability of undergraduates to disseminate their research findings across the country, and beyond, creating two e-journals. Helen has, and is, enhancing the experiences of thousands of students, educators and researchers.

I am very pleased to invite Professor Helen Walkington to accept her Award.

5.2 | Ordnance Survey Awards

Next, we have the two *Ordnance Survey Awards* and I would like to invite *Jeremy Morley*, Chief Geospatial Scientist at Ordnance Survey, to present this year's recipients with their Awards.

Jeremy Morley: The *Ordnance Survey Awards* are presented to *Dr Aidan Hessewood* and *Laura-Jayne Ward* for excellence in geography education at the secondary level.

Dr Aidan Hessewood is widely respected as an inspirational national leader in geography education in schools. Head of Geography at Bourne Grammar School in Lincolnshire, he is an enthusiastic head who has gone well beyond

the requirements for the role. Particularly active in the local community, he has established Geolincs, a branch of the Geographical Association, to offer free CPD for teachers. Nationally, he is a key supporter of the Geocapabilities project – which aims to develop curriculum leadership – and he is the creator of the project blog that provides a platform to share insights and understanding. Also of note, his classroom is covered entirely with OS maps of Lincolnshire!

Laura-Jayne Ward is an outstanding teacher and ambassador for geography. She is recognised as a particularly enthusiastic champion of the subject, with a specific commitment to working in schools with a high intake of disadvantaged pupils. Assistant Head teacher at Whitley Academy in Coventry, she is constantly looking for, and delivering, new ways to engage her students, so they can fulfil their potential and leave as enquiring young adults. Today, she is recognised for her motivation and inspiration of colleagues in her own school and the local educational community, and also for her impact nationally. Laura-Jayne is a member of the Geographical Association Post-16 committee and has written articles for *Geography Matters* and *Teaching Geography*, as well as guest writing for *Teachwire* and *Teach Secondary* magazine. She is currently undertaking research to support recruitment and retention of early career teachers.

Aidan, Laura-Jayne, and all the teachers like them are the future of geography teaching. They are recognised today for their outstanding commitments to their students, to their colleagues, and to geography teaching as a whole.

I welcome Dr Aidan Hessewood and Laura-Jayne Ward to join me on the stage to receive their Ordnance Survey Awards.

5.3 | Geographical Award

Nicholas Crane: The *Geographical Award* is awarded to *Dwayne Fields* for inspiring young people to explore the world around them.

Dwayne's personal story and his wider work with young people are vivid examples of how engagement with the outdoors through expeditions can bring real benefits to people – particularly those who might traditionally be under-represented in the sector. A committed adventurer at heart, Dwayne's stated goal is to “break the mould”. He has done that. Drawing on his own personal circumstances and experiences, including walking to the magnetic North Pole and to the South Pole, and expeditions into the countryside much closer to home, Dwayne is an inspirational and powerful advocate for the value of expeditions and time spent outdoors. He has, and is, encouraging young people of all backgrounds to realise expeditions are for them too, enabling them to benefit from all that such experiences can bring – working in teams, creating the time and space to think and to focus, a sense of achievement, and much, much more. Dwayne is changing lives and aspirations and we recognise him for that tonight.

I am delighted to welcome Dwayne Fields to accept the Geographical Award.

5.4 | Ness Award

The *Ness Award* is awarded to *Rory Stewart OBE MP* for his role in popularising geography and the wider understanding of our world and its environments through travel writing and television documentaries.

Of particular note are his 2002 walk across Afghanistan, one part of a larger walk across Asia, which served as the basis for his *New York Times* bestseller, *The Places in Between*, and *The Marches*, a travelogue about a 1,000-mile walk in the borderlands separating England and Scotland, known as the Scottish Marches. More recently, his BBC series “Border Country: The Story of Britain's Lost Middleland” brought to life the impact of the construction of Hadrian's Wall on the evolution of Britain. An accomplished diplomat and politician, Rory is recognised today for his writing which has served to popularise and to enhance our understanding of disparate parts of the world.

I am very pleased to invite Rory Stewart OBE MP to receive the Ness Award.

6 | THE NEW RGS-IBG WEBSITE AND ONLINE AVAILABILITY OF MONDAY NIGHT LECTURES FOR FELLOWS AND MEMBERS – A VIDEO INTERLUDE

We now pause briefly for the second video interlude which highlights some of the recent Monday Night Lectures and the Society's new website, which has made the lectures more easily accessible to all Fellows and members.

7 | RESEARCH AWARDS

7.1 | Gill Memorial Award

We now turn to the Awards for research, including field research and the sharing of research findings. The *Gill Memorial Award* is presented for potential shown by an early career researcher. This year, unusually, we have two recipients *Dr Hilary Geoghegan* and *Dr Nick Malleon*.

Dr Hilary Geoghegan is recognised for her research on enthusiasm and participation. Right from the outset of her PhD, she has built bridges between the world of expertise, whether university or museum based, and the world of popular enthusiasm as genuinely joint enterprises. Collaboration is fundamental to her research ethos. She has undertaken highly innovative research that transcends human and physical geography to engage with questions of participation within and beyond the academy, on topics as diverse as twentieth century architecture and citizen science, climate change and tree health. Recipient of grants and prestigious fellowships, Hilary has already developed an impressive publication portfolio, and delivered a series of high-profile invited presentations across the world.

Dr Nick Malleon is recognised for his research that has led to the development of innovative computer models to understand and explain social phenomena. He has a particular interest in simulations of crime patterns, and in models that can be used to describe the movement of people around cities and which can be used to reduce the impact of phenomena such as pollution and crime. His work is also addressing key challenges with geo-computation, particularly managing uncertainty and dynamic data assimilation. This work is ground-breaking, demonstrating not only how different forms of data can be fused into behavioural rules, but also developing models, bottom-up from the individual level, to represent spatial patterns. He too is author of numerous papers in leading journals and recipient of significant grants and prestigious fellowships.

Hilary and Nick are both rising stars, particularly impressive early career researchers, showing great potential. Both have a track record already very worthy of celebration. I am very pleased to invite *Dr Hilary Geoghegan* and *Dr Nick Malleon* to the stage to accept their Gill Memorial Awards.

7.2 | The Cuthbert Peek Award

The *Cuthbert Peek Award* recognises those advancing geographical knowledge through the application of contemporary methods, including Earth observation and mapping. This year it is presented to *Professor Keith Lilley*.

An expert in digital humanities, Professor Keith Lilley uses spatial technologies to explore and understand the medieval and twentieth century worlds. He has led cross-disciplinary research projects mapping and evaluating the historic fabric and form of towns and cities in Britain and Ireland. He also leads projects on the history of cartography and digital mapping, creating online map-based web resources to help broaden access to, and use of, historic maps. Chair of the Historic Towns Trust, he has overseen the production of the British Historic Towns Atlas, as part of a wider international European initiative, and is currently involved in projects related to both heritage and mapping in World War I, and the changing nature of cartography of Britain and Ireland.

I welcome Professor Keith Lilley to the stage to receive his award.

7.3 | Back Award

The *Back Award* is given for research contributing to policy. This year, it is presented to *Professor Hester Parr* for her research on the “Geographies of Missing People”.

Each year across the UK, around 350,000 people go missing. Most return home. Police data on these missing people reveal very little about where they go, and what happens to them when they are missing. Yet how police, families and communities treat missing people once they are found matters hugely in how missing people cope with the experience and the likelihood of them going missing again. Through detailed and careful studies on missing people in Scotland, Professor Hester Parr's research has generated new insights and practice which has enhanced public awareness and community understanding; changed the training provided to police officers in England and Scotland; and impacted how police across the UK approach cases of missing people. The issue of missing people is of national and international importance: in the UK one person goes missing every two minutes. Hester's research has, and is, changing policy and practice.

I invite Professor Hester Parr to accept the Back Award.

7.4 | Murchison Award

Professor Mark Macklin is this year's recipient of the *Murchison Award*, the most senior of the Awards, for pioneering research in fluvial geomorphology and its environmental applications.

Professor Mark Macklin is an internationally renowned researcher on river systems, who has expertly demonstrated the value of geomorphological perspectives on river behaviour and management. Mark has pioneered new approaches which have yielded critical insights into metal contamination of river sediments due to mining activity and illuminated long-term changes in flood risk through analyses of sedimentary archives, prehistoric and archaeological records. This work has brought new insights to our understanding of the sensitivity of river systems to environmental change. His research has taken place, and been supported, across the world – from Australia, to Bolivia, the Sudan, the Indo-Gangetic Plains, and closer to home in England and Wales. Author of more than 200 papers, he is one of the most highly cited geomorphologists worldwide. Contributing to “core” geomorphology, his research is also impacting upon the disciplines of Quaternary Science, Archaeology, Hydrological Engineering and Geoconservation, to the benefit of science, engineering and society.

It is my pleasure to welcome Professor Mark Macklin to the stage to receive the Murchison Award and to speak on behalf of all the Award recipients.

Professor Mark Macklin's acceptance speech

Many thanks indeed Nicholas for your very kind words and on behalf of all the award winners can I say how honoured we are to receive this recognition from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG).

Thirty-seven years ago, my PhD supervisor Professor Clarence Kidson stood here and accepted the Murchison Award. I was his last postgraduate student (he was the first Professor of Physical Geography at Aberystwyth and I was the fourth!), and in 1981, when Professor Kidson was performing the same service of which I am being asked to do today, I was coming towards the end of the first year of my PhD. Professor Kidson, or “Kit” to his friends or senior colleagues, was the leading UK coastal geomorphologist of his generation and one part of his acceptance speech has particular resonance today: “... I think of the way things have changed, and in my own field I think ... of changes in sea-level. When the Society began 150 years ago the level of the sea in south-east England was possibly a foot lower than it is now. At the end of the next 150 years the level of the sea will be ... possibly a foot higher than it is now”. It is sobering to reflect that as a consequence of anthropogenic climate change model predictions of sea-level rise over the same period are now 10 times higher, with global average annual temperature haven risen by around 0.7°C since the early 1980s when the acceleration in global warming was seriously under way.

Huge changes in climate have occurred over just one academic generation. From my perspective of studying the impact of environmental change on river systems, I perhaps have been “fortunate” to be living in a period of probably the greatest climatic volatility since the Macklin's were hunter gathers in the wilds of County Tyrone! The serious point I want to underscore is that we live in a period of accelerating environmental and societal change and geographers of all persuasions are needed more than ever to help humanity address a bewildering range of current and emerging global challenges. This has for me been brought into very sharp focus by playing “wake up sleeping bunnies” with my 18-month-old granddaughter Edith!

Meeting and solving these most pressing societal challenges requires new ways of thinking, new techniques and interdisciplinary research. This is exactly what my fellow award winners Hilary Geoghegan, Keith Lilley, Nick Malleison, Hester Parr, Junxi Qian and Natasha Wallum do. We need dedicated and empowering educators as epitomised by Aidan Hesselwood, Helen Walkington and Laura-Jayne Ward. It is also essential to have the skilled governance and creative funding that Peter Davies, Andrew Linnell, and Paul and Mary Slawson provide. We must have explorers such as Rory Stewart as there is so much we do not know, and as a field-based scientist myself, it is only in the “field” in the broadest sense of the term that the technically sophisticated skills of a geographer – worldly curiosity, integration and interdisciplinarity – come together. Last but certainly not least, we need role models such as Dwayne Fields for our young people and public alike. I have enormous empathy with Dwayne as someone who was brought up in Peckham and was inspired by a Scout leader – my Father – to explore beaches, mountains, rivers, mines and castles in North Wales.

Finally, I would like to thank the people who have helped me understand the world a little better than I would have done otherwise. Clarence Kidson, David Bowen, Ken Gregory, John Goddard and Stan Openshaw for setting me on the right path. My still good friends Jamie Woodward, Paul Brewer, Stephan Harrison, Ian Fuller, Karen Hudson-Edwards and Chris Thomas for their curious minds and passion for fieldwork. Fiona Burstow at my new adopted home at the University of Lincoln for her unwavering support. My very dear friend John Lewin who has been my mentor and most valued

colleague for more than 40 years and gently persuaded me that I could be a rebel with a cause. My parents, daughters – Jessica and Rachel – and especially my wife Jude who over the last 42 years as an artist and mother has empowered me with “Ways of Seeing” I did not know existed. In particular, I want to thank her for all of those entanglements and encounters we have shared in the watery realm, especially being my stroke in the legendary Celtic Challenge winning “Love Boat” with our rowing friends Jenny and Mick Fothergill who have taught me so much.

8 | ROYAL AND SOCIETY MEDALS

Nicholas Crane: I now turn to the Society's highest accolades: the Cherry Kearton Medal and Award, and the Busk, Victoria and Gold Medals.

8.1 | Cherry Kearton Medal and Award

The *Cherry Kearton Medal and Award* is presented to *Andy Goldsworthy* for sculptural works that inspire reflection on changing environments.

One of our most eminent environmental artists, Andy Goldsworthy, who works as sculptor, film-maker and photographer, crafts his installations out of rocks, ice, leaves, or branches, cognisant that the landscape will change. Creator of works in the United States of America, Japan, the Arctic, Australia and around the UK, particularly in his home region at Penpont, Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland, his works are exhibited internationally and are represented in private and public collections.

As he states, his remit is to “work with nature as a whole”. Sited in natural and urban settings, photography plays a crucial role in his art given the often ephemeral and transient state of the installations. And, as he describes, “... each work grows, stays, decays – integral parts of a cycle which the photograph shows at its heights, marking the moment when the work is most alive”.

I am delighted to invite James Goldsworthy, Andy's son, to the stage to receive the Cherry Kearton Medal and Award on Andy's behalf, and then, we will see a collection of images of Andy's work.

8.2 | Busk Medal

Professor Bhaskar Vira is recognised with the *Busk Medal* for excellence and originality in interdisciplinary research on economy, environment and development.

Professor Bhaskar Vira's research centres on the changing political economy of environment and development, especially in South Asia. He has a particular interest in the political ecology of forests, water, food, wildlife and land-use change, and the social and political context for biodiversity conservation. His research highlights the often-hidden costs of environmental and developmental processes, and the need to understand and draw attention to the distributional consequences of public policy choices.

Bhaskar has led large-scale interdisciplinary projects across the natural and social sciences. He is founding Director of the University of Cambridge Conservation Research Institute and is also closely involved with the Cambridge Conservation Initiative, and the university's Global Food Security strategic research initiative.

Author of two books and innumerable papers, Bhaskar is also involved in a number of initiatives that engage scholars with the public policy context, including working on the UK's National Ecosystem Assessment and the UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. In addition, as supervisor of more than 20 PhD students and advisor for a significant number of emerging (and now established) scholars, Bhaskar is also widely recognised for his generous and inspirational mentoring and support.

I am delighted to welcome Professor Bhaskar Vira to receive the Busk Medal.

Professor Bhaskar Vira's acceptance speech

It is a great honour to be recognised by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), and by my peers, for the Busk Medal.

The award citation draws attention to an important dimension of my work over the years, which has been to practise and promote interdisciplinary research. It is a particular pleasure to receive this award in the presence of our new Director, my friend and colleague Joe Smith, as we both embarked upon this interdisciplinary journey at about the same time.

Despite commitments by institutions of higher education, funding bodies and learned Societies, interdisciplinarity remains a difficult pursuit. The major intellectual and social challenges of our time demand collaboration across multiple forms of knowledge, and multiple ways of knowing. However, an interdisciplinary research agenda remains challenging within conventional University structures. Conversations across disciplinary boundaries can be difficult, imbued with differences in ways of thinking, methods, knowledge systems and values. Career structures, publication opportunities and peer-review processes tend to reinforce specialism within narrow sub-disciplines, as do institutional hierarchies, structures and boundaries that are largely created for administrative convenience.

This is where our discipline, geography, continues to lead the way. As someone who has been generously embraced by the geographical tradition, I have learned the value of mutually respectful conversations, which allow the pursuit of common intellectual agendas from a variety of starting points. I have been privileged to work with inspirational colleagues and wonderful students who have stimulated this thinking, and I am grateful to them for all that they have taught me.

8.3 | Victoria Medal

Nicholas Crane: Professor Wendy Larner is this year's recipient of the *Victoria Medal*, which is awarded to recognise outstanding geographical scholarship.

Professor Wendy Larner is a world-class scholar, internationally acclaimed for her outstanding record of research achievements and for her promotion of geography, science and discovery. Her scholarship has had a profound influence on the discipline of geography, highlighting the importance of space in the development of political economy, challenging assumptions about the inevitability of certain economic and political pathways within globalisation. Her rich theoretical work is grounded in highly original and wide-ranging empirical research – from the New Zealand fashion industry, to the board rooms of the WTO, and newly privatised telecoms companies. Her ability to move across complex conceptual terrains and to think “outside the box” has established her as a world-leading critical thinker. The quality of her work and commitments has also been recognised by prestigious appointments, including President-elect of Te Aparangi Royal Society of New Zealand and Provost at Victoria University of Wellington.

In addition, Wendy is a brilliant champion for the discipline. She is highly respected for her support of others, notably generations of scholars. As just one example, for the (largest ever) RGS-IBG conference in 2014, which Wendy chaired, she set the tone for the event by picking the theme of co-production, bringing new younger scholars to prominence, hosting powerful speakers and encouraging new ideas and initiatives to grow. Wendy has made, and continues to make, a massive contribution to human geography and to geography more generally, and is most deserving of the Victoria Medal.

Unfortunately, Professor Larner cannot join us today from New Zealand. However, she was here a couple of weeks ago and recorded her speech which we will show now.

Professor Wendy Larner's acceptance speech

Kei te rangatira, tena koe.

Friends and colleagues, greetings from Aotearoa New Zealand. I am sorry not to be with you in person, but you will appreciate that 12,000 miles is a long way to come for a party. That said, I am delighted to be with you virtually, and to acknowledge the RGS-IBG and my geography colleagues for their support. When I moved to the University of Bristol in 2005, it was a leap into the unknown for a New Zealander with a Canadian PhD, who had also spent time in the United States. I want to publicly acknowledge the warm welcome I received, and the intellectual comradeship I was offered following my move here.

However, I had always dreamed of a house by the sea back in New Zealand and when offered the opportunity to return two and a half years ago it was easy to say yes. Today my research energies are focused on my new endeavours as Provost at Victoria University of Wellington and President-elect of the Royal Society of New Zealand Te Apārangi. But I remain a geographer, interested in the spaces, places and subjects of a globalising world, thinking hard about ways to foster more environmentally, economically and socially just futures.

I am deeply humbled by the award of the Victoria Medal. I am a kid off a sheep farm, forever grateful to my mother who would bundle her five daughters into the farm truck on Friday evenings so we could go to the local library and take out as many books as we could carry. And to my father who is the smartest man I know, who left school at 14 but never lost his love for learning and knowledge. And finally my partner Don, who always supported my aspirations, ever since we met in the East End as young New Zealanders doing our “OE”.

To all of you, members of my wider academic family, I simply want to say thank you. Geography is my intellectual home and what a wonderful home it is.

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

8.4 | The Royal Medals

Nicholas Crane: I now move on to our two gold medals. The *Patron's Medal* and the *Founder's Medal* are of equal standing, and both are approved by Her Majesty The Queen. These are awarded for “the encouragement and promotion of geographical science and discovery” and this year the Patron's Medal is awarded to *Professor Yadvinder Malhi* and the Founder's Medal to *Paul Rose*.

8.4.1 | Patron's Medal

Nicholas Crane: We recognise *Professor Yadvinder Malhi* for advancing geographical science through studies of the impact of climate change on tropical ecosystems.

Professor Yadvinder Malhi is a world-leading researcher on the impact of global atmospheric change on the ecology, structure and composition of terrestrial ecosystems, in particular temperate and tropical forests. His research addresses fundamental questions about ecosystem function, diversity and dynamics, and is making vital contributions on pressing issues such as droughts and climate change.

Yadvinder's innovative research draws on a wide range of inherently interdisciplinary techniques and approaches, including field physiological studies, intensive long-term ecological and meteorological monitoring, and satellite remote sensing. This world-leading work is undertaken across Asia and Africa, and particularly across the Amazon and Andes region.

He is also co-founder of the Amazon Forest Inventory Network (RAINFOR), a forum which has enabled researchers from Latin America, Africa and Asia to share ideas, discoveries and experiences. Furthermore, the Oxford Centre for Tropical Forests, which he founded, is now one of the most important institutions for the study and promotion of the tropical rainforests of the world.

An inspiring teacher and public speaker, he has also been the catalyst for many of his students to become involved in rainforest research. Yadvinder's achievements have already been recognised by the highly prestigious Fellowship of the Royal Society.

Tonight, I am delighted to welcome Professor Yadvinder Malhi to the stage to receive the Society's Patron's medal.

Professor Yadvinder Malhi's acceptance speech

I am humbled and deeply grateful to receive this Medal.

I have been intellectually rather nomadic over my career. I started off as a physicist, then did a PhD in the meteorology of deserts, then in the ecology department in Edinburgh I became interested in tropical forests. Fourteen years ago, I moved to the School of Geography and the Environment at Oxford. At first, it was an unfamiliar realm, but over time I have found that geography is the most natural home for much of what I do, and to be the natural disciplinary home for addressing many of the fundamental challenges facing our world. This is because of its reach across both natural and human systems, its focus on real places from a variety of scales and disciplines, and its systems view that encompasses physical, biological, social and historical perspectives. Geography is at the core of addressing many of the most profound challenges we face today.

Looking back at the illustrious list of earlier recipients of this Medal I feel humbled by the iconic explorers and scientists that have preceded me. But I also see how the nature of geographical and scientific research has changed over the last century. Many early awards were for describing exotic “other worlds” that were opening up, in some cases with colonialism and arrogance as handmaidens of exploration. Nowadays, the work recognised is far more about working with humility and in partnership with colleagues in these once exotic worlds, and together illuminating the puzzles of this planet. I am proud to have built a global research network, where researchers from Latin America, Africa and Asia share ideas, discoveries and experience. Nothing gives me more pleasure than to watch students in this network mature into research leaders and environmental champions in their own countries.

In the era of Google Maps, it is easy to slip into thinking that much of the Earth is mapped and understood. But there is still a wealth of wonders to be discovered. The age of exploration of the surface of the Earth is far from complete,

especially when contemplating the far reaches of the tropical forests or the depths of the ocean. But more than that, there are vast unexplored dimensions in the ecological world. Firstly, in simply describing and understanding, the immense biological riches out there. But even more so, in understanding the subtle webs of interconnection between organisms, species, biomes and the planet, interconnections that are vital to understand if we are to navigate the environmental challenges that face us. I have probed a little into this magical dimension and have encouraged others to do the same. I sincerely believe that collectively our explorations can help shape a balanced future for the tropics.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, whose boundless enthusiasm and companionship have helped make this global web of collaboration and relationships so strong. I also thank my many students and colleagues around the world, whose dedication and passion for the tropics have made these explorations such a pleasure.

8.4.2 | Founder's Medal

Nicholas Crane: And now the final award to be presented tonight is the Founder's Medal, awarded to *Paul Rose* for his work advancing geographical science through scientific expeditions.

At the front line of exploration, and one of the world's most experienced science divers and polar travellers, for the last 30 years Paul has been leading expeditions across the planet, collaborating with many of the world's top field scientists to unlock secrets about some of the most remote and challenging regions of the world. An active explorer, a highly accomplished television and radio broadcaster, an expert field scientist and a published author, Paul not only makes these expeditions happen, but he also makes sure they deliver in terms of science and greater public understanding.

Paul also has wonderful ability to communicate and to meaningfully engage audiences in all forms. Whether speaking to country or business leaders, NGOs, local governments and communities, or young people from diverse backgrounds, he has a very rare ability to meld science, adventure, humour, awe and inspiration. He is unequalled in his mission, and capacity, to share his experiences and passion with young people – to inspire them to take part in expeditions and fieldwork, and to fulfil their potential. Paul is without question one of the world's best ambassadors for field-based geographical science and expeditions.

A former Vice President of the RGS-IBG and Chair of the Expeditions and Fieldwork Committee, and a frequent chair of the Society's signature Explore expedition weekend, Paul is also an unwavering supporter and one of the greatest ambassadors for this Society.

I am delighted to welcome Paul Rose to the stage to receive the Founder's Medal and to invite him to give the final presentation of the evening.

Paul Rose's acceptance speech

Thank you. I wouldn't be here without all of the scientists and support staff that I've shared tents with, British Antarctic Survey, National Polar Programmes, The National Science Foundation, Scripps, National Geographic and the BBC.

I came here last night from my Deep Sea expedition off of the Western Azores and head back tomorrow morning. It's an odd experience to work for over a year to organise an expedition – and then comes the moment early in the field, when all of that turns into a living, beautiful thing – a time to celebrate a little. But in this case, I left them and came here to see you and get my hands on this. It's the first time I've ever done this! And let me tell you, it's worth it.

And that sharpness and clarity from a front-line field science expedition perspective is the thing that keeps me going and I have a dream that with the influence of the RGS-IBG (no pressure Joe!), it becomes a requirement that no one can leave school unless they have been on a field science expedition. Imagine – every single child can have a field science approach that rewards curiosity, bravery and truth. Let's get this into the National Curriculum.

One of the daily benefits of a field science life is how we read the news – for instance, in the press yesterday: *Sea birds on Shetland's cliffs* – terns, kittiwakes, puffins. *Catastrophic drop in numbers due to climate change*. It's one thing to read about it – in yesterday's paper – but I read that news and instantly feel, sense and smell those cliffs because I've climbed them.

For me – field science is the most essential career choice today. I've presented at ESG investment conferences – and when I ask the Natural Capital investment teams and the Carbon Trading units where the numbers come from – they rarely know! And, of course, I then love that opportunity to speak about these incredibly valuable long-term data sets that are collected from those of us at the front line of field science: PhD students crawling out of the tent every three hours, NGO teams launching weather balloons eight times a day, marine scientists diving under polar ice – you name it, at any moment

in time there is a huge army of often undervalued, under-recognised, field scientists out there providing data for the most vital and far-reaching decisions made.

It's not an exaggeration to say our sustainability and very survival is built on decisions made from field science data. So I see a future where field science is recognised as the most desirable career choice. When I was leaving school at 15 I met with the career counsellor who laughed like hell when I said I wanted to be a North Sea oil rig diver – he said the best thing was to get a reliable job in the Post Office.

Imagine that scene now – where the career counsellor says “You want to get into field science – because it has great pay and conditions, best pension plan, it will bring you recognition ... it's the best thing to do”.

I'm now going back to the sea and it dawns on me that we should never underestimate the effect of this medal. Just after Jacques Cousteau received this medal he stopped using dynamite to access coral atolls and created the series, *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*.

My personal expectations are more modest. All I'm hoping for is that my team haven't finished the whole 30 days of work in the two days that I've been away.

So, thank you Nick, the Society – a place that has always been my spiritual home, to the Medals and Awards Committee, Her Majesty The Queen for approving the medal, and to one exceptional man who never gave up on me: a geography teacher at Suttons Secondary Modern. Thank you Mr Grey.

9 | CONCLUDING REMARKS

Nicholas Crane: To conclude this event, I would like to add my own personal congratulations to all the recipients of the Society Medals and Awards for 2018. It has been a wonderful occasion which has celebrated the breadth of achievement we have within the geography discipline – in research, field science, expeditions, teaching, policy, public engagement and leadership.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the reception. I wish you all a very pleasant evening and thank you again for joining us.

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