



Rural Geography Research Group Newsletter

Winter 2021

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Editorial

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Dear RGRG members,
Welcome to our Winter 2021 newsletter.

I would like to thank Bruce for his amazing work as newsletter editor and for his support as he handed over the editor’s pen. I look forward to continuing to share the fantastic news contributed by rural geography colleagues from around the world.

In this issue, we take a look back at the 2021 RGS-IBG Annual Conference - the first to be held virtually. The RGRG had a great conference, with many well-attended sessions and several thought-provoking discussions. We look forward to hopefully reuniting in Newcastle in 2022, where Professor Rachel Pain will chair the next Annual Conference.

We hear from Hannah Budge and Natasha Coleman, our new postgraduate representatives, on their plans for the year. The number of postgraduate rural researchers is ever-growing and I look forward to showcasing more of their work in future editions of this newsletter.

Lavanya Gupta, Senior Research Fellow at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, provides a report on her research with women in the Kumaon Himalayas of India and we have a note from the Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas on their recent symposium with the PLACE Collective.

Finally, you’ll find some details of upcoming events on page 11, including details of our early thinking for a RGRG 50th anniversary celebration!

If you would like to contribute to our summer newsletter, please do email me or [get in touch on Twitter](#).

Secretary's report

Megan Palmer-Abbs

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Dear RGRG members,

We hope this finds you well.

The large majority of the RGRG's activity continues online - this year, though we had hoped we may be able to meet in-person for our AGM, it was again conducted over Zoom. This followed the majority of the RGS' Annual Conference being taken online, though there is hope that next year's conference in Newcastle will allow us to meet in-person once again - it will certainly be most welcome, as this month marks two years since our last in-person committee meeting!

Further details of the 2022 conference have now been announced, and we spent some time in our recent interim committee meeting discussing the event - please look out for communications inviting session proposals. We hope to include a celebration of the RGRG's 50th anniversary (for more see page 11) and we look forward to welcoming members, old and new, to celebrate this milestone with us.

There have been several changes within the committee this year, which you can read about on page 3. In particular, we offer our thanks to Bruce Scholten for his outstanding contribution to the group as editor of the newsletter and to Julie Urquhart for her contributions to the group over several years. After 11 years in post, Gareth Enticott hands over his role as Treasurer to Andrew Maclaren - Gareth will remain on as a co-opted member due to his significant contribution to rural geography. As many people on our committee are reaching the limit of their formal membership, it was decided that the RGRG should establish an Advisory Board. Those on the Board will be able to contribute their expertise to the group and mentor those who are joining the committee for the first time.

We hope that 2022 sees the return of more in-person events - you can find details of several on page 11. Our postgraduate representatives are also running a virtual book club, which all are welcome to attend - the next session will focus on *The Living Mountain*, by Nan Shepherd, a lyrical testament in praise of the Cairngorms. In the meantime, you can keep up to date with RGRG news on our website and find contact details should you wish to get in touch.

Vennlig hilsen / Best wishes,

Megan

RURAL GEOGRAPHY RESEARCH GROUP

A Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

HOME ABOUT US NEWS RGRG NEWSLETTER EVENTS GRANTS AND PRIZES RESOURCES POST GRADUATE RESEARCHERS

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Home

Welcome to the Rural Geographers Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)!. You can find information about the committee, events, Post Graduate Researchers (PGRs) and research and teaching resources as well as details of how to join the research group.

Island of Elba, Italy

The 2022 RGS-IBG Annual International Conference will be held at The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) in Newcastle from Tuesday 30 August to Friday 2 September 2022.

Tweets by @RGRG_Rural

Rural Geography Research Group (RGRG) ROS-IBG Retweeted

CCRN @CCRN_UK

All editorial co-authored by @DamonMayo has just been published in *HG*. Access here drives for 50 days: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141801.2022.2080000>

Part of a forthcoming #SpecialIssue @EriGeoPlan @foodresarchuk @Shelwells @ghuman #soodhrday #GeoResearch

Journal of Human Geography

Examining food futures: Towards a 'responsible food' in food and agriculture

Keep up to date by visiting [our website](https://www.rgrg.org.uk).
News, resources and event details all welcome!

Incoming committee for 2021-2022

Name	Committee Position	Term dates (start and end years)
Prof. Martin Phillips	Chair	2019-2022
Dr Megan Palmer-Abbs	Secretary	2018-2022
Dr Andrew Maclaren	Treasurer	2020-2022
Aimee Morse	News & Website Editor	2021-2024
Dr Fiona Williams	Ordinary member (co-opted) (Dissertation Prizes)	2021-2022
Dr Felipe da Silva Machado	Ordinary member (Social Media & JISCMail co-ordinator)	2019-2022
Prof. Damian Maye	Ordinary member	2019-2022
Dr Eifiona Thomas Lane	Ordinary member	2019-2022
Dr Fidel Budy	Ordinary member (support Dissertation Prizes)	2021-2024
Andrew Grayson	Ordinary member	2021-2024
Dr Gareth Enticott	Ordinary member (co-opted)	2020-2022
Natasha Coleman	PGR representative	2021-2022
Hannah Budge	PGR representative	2021-2022
Dr Keith Halfacree	Advisory Board	2021-2022

This year, Andrew Maclaren takes on the role of Treasurer. Gareth Enticott continues on the committee as an Ordinary Member due to his significant contribution to rural geography. Fidel Budy will be shadowing Fiona Williams' work on the Dissertation Prizes.

Bruce Scholten passed the editor's pen to Aimee Morse after 12 years of wonderful editing. We thank him for all his work on the newsletter during this time. Aimee will also assist with the website.

We welcomed new Ordinary Member, Andrew Grayson, and two new Postgraduate Representatives: Hannah Budge and Natasha Coleman. For more from them, see our Postgraduate Report on page 6.

We also saw the start of the RGRG advisory group, and welcome Keith Halfacree's support in his new role.

The Royal Geographical Society's Annual Conference

The RGRG sponsored many popular sessions at this year's RGS Annual Conference. Reports from two sponsored sessions follow:

Reconfiguring farmed animal health and welfare: exploring and transcending borders between spaces, times, species and knowledges.

*Niamh Mahon, Research Associate, Department of Geography, University of Hull
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Jersey cows outside Horton (AM, 2018)

Lewis Holloway and Niamh Mahon of the University of Hull, and Amy Proctor and Beth Clark of Newcastle University convened three sessions under the title 'Reconfiguring farmed animal health and welfare: exploring and transcending borders between spaces, times, species and knowledges' at this year's virtual RGS-IBG annual international conference. The sessions were proposed in part to link with on-going work they are undertaking as part of the four-year, Wellcome Trust-funded FIELD (Farm-level Interdisciplinary approaches to Endemic Livestock Disease) project.

The sessions explored emerging discourses and practices associated with persistent health and welfare issues affecting farmed animals and examined the constitution and effects of sets of material and conceptual borders within which farmed animal health and welfare is understood and enacted. Papers presented covered a wide range of topics, from human – non-human relations, through to perspectives on care, and considerations of biosecurities. There was also the presentation and discussion of the short film 'Ar y Fferm' ('On the Farm') created by Mark Jones, an artist in residence attached to the FIELD project.

We would like to thank all those that contributed a paper and everyone that attended the sessions, enriching the discussions with your questions and comments.

To find out more about the FIELD project please visit us at field-wt.co.uk, or follow us on [Twitter @field_wt](https://twitter.com/field_wt)

New and Emerging Rural Researchers

In this year's New and Emerging Rural Researchers sessions, convened by Aimee Morse, we had nine presentations on a variety of rural research topics. After last year's break, it was great to hear how peers were progressing with their work and each presentation prompted interesting discussion. Though virtual, it was fantastic to welcome so many PGR and ECR students to each of the sessions, and we look forward to hearing updates on their work in the months and years to come. The presenters' names and their research topics can be found in the image to the right.

Rob Booth:
Net-zero futures for UK agriculture: A critical analysis of scenarios, targets and temporalities

Theo Lenormand:
North-West Wales upland farming in focus: Modelled farms' economic performance show that future policies are unlikely to change current evolution trends

David Amuzu:
Private sector certification programme 'powers' local agrarian change in Ghana's cocoa sector: A contribution to the debate on supply chain governance and new peasantries

Hannah Budge:
'You don't look like farmers': A study of women in agriculture in the Scottish and Canadian Islands

Mateja Slovenc:
Ethnography of moral economies in cooperative relations between farmers

Jens Reda and Marcus Heinz:
Resonances of civic engagement in everyday village life

Ida Nilsson:
The construction of a Swedish rural planning agenda: A study of the rural as a 'planning problem'

William Bedford:
The governance of rural economic restructuring in Bancroft, Ontario

Niamh McHugh:
The latest driving force of rural gentrification?: How digital marketing is influencing processes of rural gentrification

Renhao Yang:
Land commodification and rural gentrification: Blurring the rural-urban boundary in Chengdu, China

*Presenters in the New and Emerging Rural Researchers session at the
2021 RGS Annual Conference*

The other RGRG sponsored sessions were as follows:

Beyond the Borderlands: exploring sustainable rural futures - convened by Eifiona Thomas Lane, Lois Mansfield and Rebecca Jones.

LGBTQ liveability in rural spaces - 2 sessions convened by Stefanie Boulila.

Peripheral regions and the big challenges for the 21st Century - 2 sessions convened by Megan Palmer-Abbs and Camilla Risvoll.

Rural populism: New emerging political geographies of the rural - 2 sessions convened by Matthias Naumann and Michael Woods.

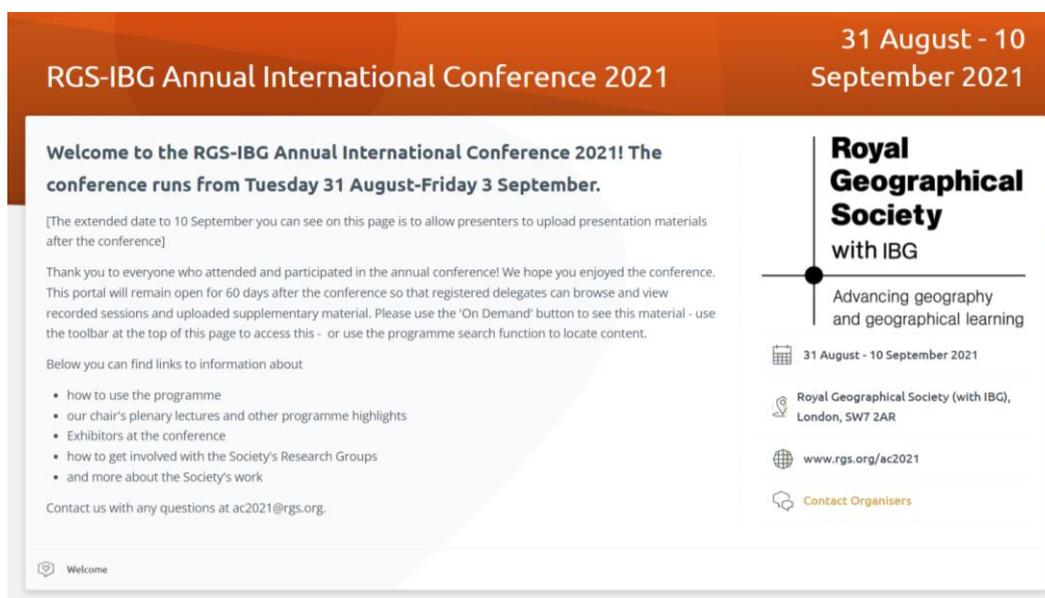
The water pollution blame game: governance and power relations in managing diffuse water pollution from agriculture - convened by Adrienne Attorp, Alison Caffyn and Charlotte Chivers.

Tracing, traversing and transgressing borders in rural geography - 2 sessions convened by Martin Phillips and Felipe da Silva Machado.

Virtual ruralities: (Re)presenting and exploring the rural in a virtual world - convened by Mark Riley, Lee-Ann Sutherland and Dan Robertson.

Ways of speaking as if through soil: The strange material of rural forgettings - convened by Rowan Jaines and Natasha Coleman.

Where do we go to eat (now)? Rethinking food systems in disruptive times - 2 sessions convened by Stephen Jones, Anna Krzywoszynska and Damian Maye.



*This year's conference welcome was a little different to the one usually received on Exhibition Road!
A screenshot of the front page of the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2021, hosted on the Ex-Ordo platform.*

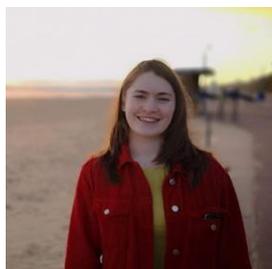
The RGS recently announced that the call for papers for the [2022 Annual Conference](#) is now open. Papers and sessions which address the Chair's theme of [Geographies Beyond Recovery](#) are welcome.

The organisers encourage everyone to think about the conference, what it means and what it offers to those attending; Professor Rachel Pain's [statement on inclusivity and safety can be read here](#). You can find more details on the RGS conference pages.

Postgraduate report

An introduction to our Postgraduate Representatives

Hannah Budge



Hannah is in her third year of an ESRC-funded PhD at Newcastle University.

Her thesis will examine the role of women in agriculture in the Scottish and two Atlantic Canadian Islands. Looking at the barriers, in what was traditionally viewed as a masculine industry, experienced between and within these communities.

This year, Hannah will oversee the RGRG PGR blog posts, so if you are interested in writing a post, get in touch!

You can contact Hannah by email: h.budge2@newcastle.ac.uk or on Twitter: [@HannahBudge](https://twitter.com/HannahBudge)

Natasha Coleman



Natasha is in the second year of her ESRC-funded PhD at Swansea University.

Her research focuses on how English and Welsh private estates are adapting within a 21st century context. In particular, this centres on the cultural landscape through which game shooting materializes and evaluates the lived experiences of actors that uphold these spaces.

This year, her main role is organising the Book Club. If you would like to find out more about the sessions, get in touch!

You can contact Natasha by email: 988535@swansea.ac.uk or on Twitter: [@ncc_96](https://twitter.com/ncc_96)

Natasha wrote the latest PGR blog post, [which you can find here](#), and we've another in the pipeline, so check back soon!



Images from Natasha Coleman's [blog post on shooting estates' communities](#).

The next book club meeting will be held in the new year and we will focus on [Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain*](#). If you would like to be added to the book club mailing list, get in touch with Natasha.

Our postgraduate representatives will work together to plan RGRG contributions to the Mid-Term and Annual conferences and also plan to organise some writing workshops. You can keep up to date with PGR news on the [RGRG PGR page](#).

Mountain Women, Social Innovation and Traditional Knowledge in the Kumaon Himalayas

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The question of learning about mountain women arises from the context of eco-feminist and feminist literature. In the article "Integrated Mountain Development: A Question of Gender Mainstreaming," Dach suggested that mountain women's social and collective identity is unique. "It varies from valley to valley, and even in the same geographical area."



Figure 1: Aipan Art on wall, Old Thana Road of Almora city, commissioned by district officer and CM of Uttarakhand

Kumauni women have rich knowledge of preserving the socio-cultural heritage of the Himalayas. They cohesively use their traditional knowledge in agriculture, cooking, making art, stitching, knitting, medicine, livestock management, and animal husbandry. But these activities, which they perform daily, are considered a part of their homemaker duty or housework. This non-recognition of women's knowledge in mundane activities creates a gap for the potential development of women's skills.

Kumauni women have always been sustaining the Himalayan ecosystems. They are burdened to support both mountain and household economy because men generally out-migrate, leaving them behind to take care of the family. But the mountain society is closely knit and follows rules of the patriarchal system, which restricts women's free will to employment and mobility. Thus, social enterprises have tried to capture a potential gap highlighting women's traditional knowledge for their empowerment in the mountains.

Enterprises like Minakriti and Himadri Hans Handloom have been trying to capture Aipan Art (the art of Kumauni women) onto innovative products. Aipan is a religious art practiced by Kumauni women on floors, staircases, and walls to invite gods and goddesses for goodwill. It is a fairly straightforward process. It includes drawing scriptures and motifs by hand using Biswar (hand-ground white paste of soaked rice) on the base of Geru (Red Ochre (red colour soil from the forest)) that can be seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2.



Figure 2: Aipan Art on stairs made by Bhagwati Devi (sitting). She is currently running her home as a Homestay (named Juniyali) under Sewa Bharat, India



Figure 3: Aipan workshop in Himadri Hans Handloom

But now, this art has been reconceptualized and transformed into abstract and contemporary paintings. Himadri Hans Handloom has been working with interns from prominent fashion schools of India, like the National Institute of Fashion and Technology (NIFT). They collaborate with the women to enhance their previous knowledge of Aipan. They upskill them to draw Aipan over various products, for example, bookmarks, shawls, scarfs, sweaters, name tags, and abstract paintings, see Figure 3.

Minakshi Khati, a young woman from the Chhoi Village of Ramnagar, Nanital, founded Minakriti, a project which aims to revive Aipan knowledge through various methods of digital marketing and schooling workshops. She says that whatever she knows about the Aipan has been taught by her grandmother and mother. She was motivated to learn and popularise this art; thus, she started her venture personally by posting traditional Aipan art drawn on walls and floors on social media and then slowly diversified it into a modern urban setup.



Figure 4: Urban Wall art with Aipan by Minakshi Khati (standing beside wall art) at Sewa Kalyan, Dehradun (2019)

Figure 4 is wall art that uses Aipan and demonstrates a message saying, "Nasha Nash ka hai Dooja Nam, Krta Tan, Mann, Dhan, Teeno Nakam." It means that "Drug abuse is the second name of demise; it destroys your body, soul, and money altogether."

Minakshi hosts several competitions like selfie_with_aipan art on social media (Facebook and Instagram) to increase awareness about Aipan and to encourage people to feel proud of their heritage. Her product line includes but is not limited to plates, saucers, name plates, wooden showpieces, earthen flower pots, Diyas (earthen lamp), and torans (decorative frieze hanging).



Figure 5: Bookmarks with Aipan Art signifying the name and village details of women artist

The venture is a start-up established in 2019, and then Covid-19 struck, but she has still made sales of more than 50,000 rupees. She is continuously involved in online and offline workshops for teaching Aipan. These workshops include around 25- 30 people of all ages, classes, caste, and gender. She is building up her team and giving employment to a few women. But as this is a start-up, not many women have been able to join and gain any monetary assistance.

In Himadri Hans Handloom, however, women have been economically empowered. Almost all the women who work here are housemakers, but now they have started earning about 6000-7000 rupees per month. Moreover, to build up women's self-confidence, the enterprise follows the practice of publishing their names on the price tags of their products (Figure 5).

In Minakriti, the students who join the workshops are given knowledge and awareness about their dying art (Figure 6). Minakshi even tries to provide students older than 16 years the opportunity to work when she receives any bulk projects. The beneficiaries are paid around 2000 rupees plus a substantive amount of the cost per piece they decorate with Aipan. Thus, the art which was traditionally made with natural ingredients is now made by paints, brushes, or sewn on different apparels. Aipan is something the Kumauni women have known for ages but they didn't have enough knowledge to transform this skill to earn a livelihood. This only shows how much women's skills are ignored and how much they can grow if skills are adequately recognized and given a good platform.



Figure 6: Aipan Workshop by Minakriti at Chitai, Almora, Uttarakhand

Recently, in the wake of recognizing the art formally, the Uttarakhand has given Aipan Art a Geographical Indication Tag. Moreover, several other social enterprises are trying to develop earning opportunities using other traditional art-based knowledge of women like Pirul, Croisade, and Bhuli. Even the unique ability of pahadi (Himalayan) culinary cuisine (for example, bhang ka namak (weed salt) and nettle sag (a dish made from nettle leaves)) has been highlighted for further development and empowerment of women through innovation.

Thus, I would like to state that the idea of formally understanding the regional difference in traditional skills of both genders and utilizing its potential needs more support and research, especially in India, which has such a diverse population rich with ancient culture. I hope to see more blooming indigenous social enterprises in India in the near future.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank Minakriti, Sewa Bharat, and Himadri Hans Handloom for their cooperation and participation in the research. I am also humbly obliged to the university grant commission for funding the research. And last but not least, I want to thank my research guide, Dr. Anjali Kulkarni, who supported me immensely during my study and provided critical inputs for the formation of research.

Disclaimer:

The research is the unpublished and original work of Lavanya Gupta. This study was conducted from Jan 2021- March 2021 and duly submitted on 24 July 2021 to complete her MPhil (2019-2021) course at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences.



Aipan Art on Bookmarks and shawls at Himadri Hans outlet, Kasar Devi, Almora, Uttarakhand



Aipan workshop in Himadri Hans Handloom

The University of Cumbria's Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas hosts a symposium on Natural Beauty

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View from Dubs Hut Bothy, Lake District National Park
(AM, 2019)

The Centre recently hosted the symposium: *What is Natural Beauty?*, led by the PLACE Collective, with the Wye Valley AONB Partnership and the Lake District National Park. In this symposium, attendees discussed what natural beauty *was*, and how our actions frame what it *will be* in the future. Four key themes guided the discussion: *In the eye of the beholder*; *renewable beauty*; *artistic framing*; and, *natural value*. Reflections will be compiled into a post-event report, with artwork from the Artist-in-Residence. Tweets about the event can be found by searching for #NatBeaut21.

The Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA) is an international research centre which draws together an interdisciplinary team of academics, professors of practice and visiting and honorary fellows, all interested in making a difference to National Parks and protected area management. This diversity was reflected in the [agenda of the symposium](#), with presentations and provocations from experts in many disciplines, including visual art, literature, earth science, geography and more following an introduction from Kate Humble. You can find out more about the [CNPPA's work on their website](#).



CNPPA, 2021



PLACE Collective, 2021

The PLACE Collective is a community of artists engaged with issues of nature, environment and rural landscapes. PLACE was founded by RGS Fellows Harriet and Rob Fraser and sits within the CNPPA. Their aim is to create links between artists, rural communities, academics and organisations charged with caring for landscapes. For more detail on their work, please [visit their website](#).

Upcoming events

Thursday 3rd and Friday 4th March 2022: [The Countryside and Community Research Institute Winter School](#) - an event for Postgraduate Researchers, University of Gloucestershire, UK.

Monday 28th and Tuesday 29th March 2022: [International Conference on Rural Entrepreneurship](#), Sydney, Australia.

Monday 4th - Wednesday 6th April 2022: [Annual Conference of The Agricultural Economics Society](#), KU Leven, Belgium.

Sunday 10th - Thursday 14th April 2022: [The 14th European Farming Systems Conference](#), University of Evora, Portugal.

Thursday 5th and Friday 6th May 2022: [EUROGEO: Re-visioning geography for sustainability in the post-Covid era](#), University of the Aegean, Greece.

Monday 23rd - Wednesday 25th May 2022: [The 6th Nordic Conference for Rural Research](#), Tahko Village, Finland.

Tuesday 19th - Friday 22nd July 2022: [The XV World Congress of Rural Sociology](#), Cairns, Australia.

Monday 8th and Tuesday 9th August 2022: [International Conference on Geography, Environment and Society](#), Vancouver, Canada.



A reminder that the RGRG celebrates **50 years** in 2022!

We'll be planning an event to mark this milestone. *Martin Phillips*, Chair of the RGRG, provides this update:

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Research Group, and the Committee has decided to mark this milestone by holding a meeting of the Research Group in association with the RGS-IBG Annual Conference in Newcastle (**30th August - 2nd September 2022**). The event will probably run over 2 days and will focus on the development of rural geography over the period since the formation of the Research Group and the current and future directions in rural areas and rural research. Papers and other contributions connected to these themes will be invited, along with ones connected to the theme of the annual RGS-IBG conference, 'Geographies Beyond Recovery'. A key note lecture connecting the Research Group meeting to the theme of the annual conference will be organised on the theme of nature recovery.

It is planned that provision will be made for on-line as well as in person participation, although a key aim of the event will be provide an opportunity for members of the research group to meet up collectively with each other. The Research Group has been fortunate to have received a grant from the RGS to support the development of this event and to provide some financial support for early career and low-income participants.

Further details of the event will be circulated in the new year.

If you have any further events you would like adding to our [event webpage](#), please send an email with details to Aimee. If you've been to an event recently and would like to share your experience, articles are most welcome for the RGRG website.

Thank you for reading the RGRG's 2021 Winter Newsletter.

Short articles, book reviews and comments are always welcomed for the next edition (**July 2022**) and for our website. For more information, email Aimee on aimeemorse@connect.glos.ac.uk