

Year of Fieldwork: looking back

After an exhilarating year of celebration, the Year of Fieldwork came to a close in August. We would like to thank the very many schools and teachers who supported this joint effort between the GA and 26 other organisations, including the Field Studies Council (FSC), Ordnance Survey (OS), RGS with IBG and ESRI (UK) to promote the place of fieldwork in the curriculum, from early years to A level.



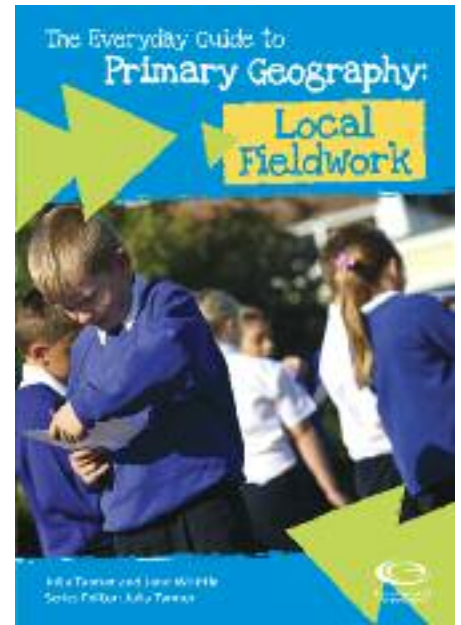
The purposes of the Year of Fieldwork were to:

- increase the opportunities for students of all ages to experience high-quality fieldwork
- support the integration of fieldwork into the school curriculum from primary to post-16
- raise awareness of the importance of fieldwork as a pedagogy and as a critical tool for geographers
- promote the benefits of fieldwork as a skill across a wide range of subject areas.

What did we achieve?

Fieldwork CPD was one of the most popular and impactful activities during the Year of Fieldwork. Fieldwork experts and practising teachers shared their know-how through GA regional CPD events and the GA Annual Conference, which included a fieldwork pathway for the first time. We also worked with the FSC, OS and the exam boards to organise national events in preparation for fieldwork at GCSE and A level. Nearly 1300 teachers attended these CPD events. Selected FSC fieldwork courses were also made available at a discount to GA members (www.geography.org.uk/cpdevents/courses).

Those unable to access face-to-face CPD shared their ideas and experiences through social media (see @The_GA #yearoffieldwork). Extensive support and guidance for integrating fieldwork into the curriculum was also available through our revamped website section (www.geography.org.uk/resources/fieldwork) and publications such as *Fieldwork through Enquiry*, the *Everyday Guide to Primary Geography: Local Fieldwork* and *Fieldwork files*. We were indebted to the teachers who explored ideas and exemplified their fieldwork practices in detail, through the many fieldwork articles that appeared in our journals. Through our online archives, teachers will have access to these excellent ideas for years to come. From this year, schools will also be able to achieve Geography Quality Mark Centre of Excellence status via a fieldwork 'strand', so we'll be able to build a store of good fieldwork exemplars for all Quality Mark schools to access online.



At the policy level, the GA worked closely with exam boards to help interpret the new content requirements for fieldwork within GCSEs and A levels from 2016. We designed and ran a survey of secondary fieldwork to help us understand the challenges schools will face meeting these increased expectations (see Policy matters on page 8).

We also worked to more clearly define the contribution of fieldwork towards academic achievement in geography, while acknowledging that it makes a positive impact on social and personal skills, character traits such as resilience and on attitudes and values.

By defining fieldwork as 'the application of knowledge and understanding to the particular circumstances of a real-world location', we suggested that the act of observing and asking questions of, and in, the real world provides a unique learning experience. It develops investigative skills in distinctive and important ways, teaching young people to become geographers through careful observation and primary data collection. It gives them experience of the 'messy' world and invites young people to both appreciate and begin to make sense of its complexity. It also teaches them to appreciate that the 'theoretical' world of the textbook and their own investigative research is partial and limited – a critical insight into the nature of geography. Goethe's observation that 'we only see what we know' is pertinent here: it is through activities such as fieldwork that young people learn to see the world differently – an idea that is echoed in the title of *GA's Manifesto for Geography: A different view* (www.geography.org.uk/resources/adifferentview).

So once again, thank you to everyone who supported the 'YoF': keep on getting out there and sharing your fieldwork experiences in the future.

Photo: Bryan Ledgard.



Field visit at the GA Annual Conference 'Carbon connections in the field'.

Year of Fieldwork in action

Some of the most enthusiastic geographers from year 8 at Seaford Head School in Seaford, East Sussex, attended the University of Brighton for a fieldwork day in May. Head of Geography at Seaford Head School, **Liz Smith**, outlines the day.

Three groups of students worked with PGCE trainee geography teachers and were challenged in a variety of fieldwork activities using the campus surroundings.



Activity 1: Students investigated the best possible site for a wind turbine on the university campus. Discussion took place about the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed locations on the rural-urban fringe. Numeracy skills were also developed as students were required to measure distances between potential obstacles. They annotated field sketches and conducted bi-polar assessments of the environment.



Activity 2: Students investigated the accessibility and inclusiveness of the Amex stadium, home to Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club and adjacent to the university campus. Activities included the popular scavenger hunt, during which students identified areas of good accessibility and inclusivity. Students were provided with annotated maps of the stadium and added further information about what made places more accessible and inclusive.



subsequently represented their data as a living graph outside on the rugby pitch.

Activity 3: Students had to assess the sustainability of the Falmer campus and make suggestions for how it could be improved. Activities included field sketches comparing what they thought the campus might have looked like 10,000 years ago with how the campus appeared today. Students also conducted a bi-polar analysis of sustainability at a variety of sites across the campus and

All groups consolidated their knowledge and were allocated the task of producing a group presentation of their findings, which helped them to develop their confidence, think systematically, manage information and learn from each other.

Students were challenged to make links across the curriculum, build on their prior knowledge and understanding of geography, and develop a sense of self-discipline. The trainee teachers at the University of Brighton demonstrated that they were very well equipped to cater for fieldwork opportunities in their own schools in the future.

This annual trip helped to maintain valuable links between the school and university. It also re-inforced awareness of how fieldwork and out-of classroom learning experiences are a highly valuable tool that can raise standards and skills; one of the aims of the 'Year of Fieldwork'.