

# The Geographical Association

## Chronology

Key people, achievements, places and events

### OXFORD: 1893 - 1917

The Geographical Association (GA) is established through the enthusiasm of public schools (especially that of B. Bentham Dickinson of Rugby) and by the opposition of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) to the use of 'The Lantern' and to women members. Oxford serves as the GA's operational headquarters.

#### 1890s

- 1893: The GA is founded 20 May at a meeting in the New Common Room, Christ Church, Oxford, led by Halford Mackinder (later Sir), Douglas Freshfield (Honorary Secretary of the RGS) and ten others (mainly Masters from public schools). A subscription of five shillings is set. On 3 August a committee chaired by Dr. Hugh Robert Mill (Librarian at the RGS) is set up to run the GA. GA members enjoy reduced subscription rates to the *Geographical Journal*. The Colonial Institute joins as a corporate member with a three guinea subscription. GA membership stands at 35.
- 1894: The GA's first General Meeting is held 21 December at the Royal Colonial Institute.
- 1894-5: Four key questions are identified: Should geography examination papers be prepared and reviewed by experts? Should physical geography be an essential feature of a geography course, and if so, what should be the syllabus? Should a knowledge of the whole world in general or a more detailed knowledge of a region be required? Should geography be a compulsory subject for some competitive examinations?
- 1897: Douglas Freshfield becomes the first President of the GA, resigning from the RGS because the organisation would not admit women Fellows; he remains in office until 1911. Dr. Mill compiles *Hints to Teachers of Geography on the Choice of Books for Research and Reading*.
- 1897-8: The GA publishes specimen geography syllabi, asks headmasters of public boarding schools to make geography a subject for their entrance examinations and publicises debate on the geography curriculum; the topic then appears in the American *Journal of School Geography*.
- 1898-9: The GA negotiates with publishers in order to improve school atlases.

#### 1900s

- 1900: GA membership opens to all teachers of geography irrespective of age, gender or type of school. Key lectures given by H. J. Mackinder on *Geography as Training for the Mind* and B. B. Dickenson on *The Use of the Lantern Slide*.
- 1901: The GA's first journal *The Geographical Teacher* (renamed *Geography* in 1927) is launched in October, at first financially guaranteed by Mr. T.G. Roper, an HM Inspector of Schools. The journal is free to members but one shilling to non-members.

- 1903: Co-operation with the Ordnance Survey starts with maps for schools at educational rates (1d a sheet).
- 1904: The South London Branch becomes the first GA local Branch on 17 March. Bedfordshire and Bournemouth Branches are founded just over a year later.
- 1905: *The Geographical Teacher* (Autumn issue) publishes A.J. Herbertson's famous paper *The World's Major Natural Regions*.
- 1909: With the help of J.F. Unstead, the GA publishes *The Guide to Geographical Books and Appliances* (a new edition of H.R. Mill's *Hints to Teaching Geography*).

### 1910s

- 1911: Presidency of the GA becomes an annual appointment.
- 1913: The GA Constitution is agreed on 9 January.
- 1914-8: Many Branches close down for the duration of the First World War but *The Geographical Teacher* continues publication.
- 1916: The loan of slides to members is handed over to the Diagram Company (until 1939).

## ABERYSTWYTH: 1917 - 1930

GA Honorary Secretary H.J. Fleure becomes Professor of Geography and Anthropology at the University of Aberystwyth. He moves the GA's library and office there and uses his Chairmanship of Council to promote international understanding as well as geography.

### 1920s

- 1920: GA membership is opened to geographers overseas and members recruited from every inhabited continent in the world. One objective of this internationalisation is to provide up-to-date articles for the journal.
- 1921: International Branches are founded in Canada, West Africa and Ceylon. The first Spring Conference is held in Southampton.
- 1922: The 'Touring Branch' conducts five home motor tours and two abroad (to France and Switzerland) in its first year. The 'Branch' closes in the late 1920s due to a tax issue.
- 1923: The GA Library and postal borrowing service moves to Aberystwyth. Members pay an extra five shillings to use this service to borrow one of the 500 books. The growth of the GA leads to the cessation of interest in educational matters by the RGS.
- 1924: The GA becomes involved with the production of BBC programmes on geographical topics; 'Climbing Everest' is the first to be broadcast.
- 1925: The Carnegie Trust gives the GA a grant of £1,000 to buy more books and the collection grows to two thousand items. There are also around two thousand slides available for loan.

- 1926: Spring Conference becomes an annual event and Bristol hosts that year. GA conferences achieve renown for the geographical entertainment provided at the annual dinner and the introduction of an exhibition of books and apparatus.
- 1927: The GA's journal, *The Geographical Teacher*, is renamed *Geography*. From 1929 this is published quarterly instead of three times a year.

## MANCHESTER: 1930 - 1946

Professor Fleure takes up the newly-established Chair of Geography at the University of Manchester. The Chief Education Officer in Manchester generously gives the GA free accommodation in the Manchester High School of Commerce. When this becomes unavailable, temporary accommodation is provided at 103 Princess Street, Manchester.

### 1930s

- 1930: The GA (led by Professor Sir L. Dudley Stamp), the Ordnance Survey and the Ministry of Agriculture undertake the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain in October. The GA's Library increases to four thousand volumes.
- 1932: The Spring Conference is scheduled for Heidelberg but this is abandoned because of currency and political problems in Germany. The *Handbook for Geography Teachers* is published under the direction of Miss D. M. Forsaith. James Fairgrieve spearheads the use of educational films in geography.
- 1933: The Bradford Branch takes eight hundred pupils to York and Whitby on a day excursion. The foundation of the Institute of British Geographers is seen as one reason why GA membership falls during this period.
- 1934: The GA submits *The Place and Value of Geography in the Curriculum other than those Administered under the Elementary Schools Code for Pupils under 16* to the Board of Education. 1,271 schools listen to BBC Travel Talks promoted by the GA. The GA Library has over 7,000 volumes at this time with 1,700 loaned each year.
- 1937 – 1942: H.J. Mackinder, at the age of 82, writes much of what is later to be included in the 1991 National Curriculum for geography.
- 1938: The GA submits evidence to the Government's Barlow Review on the *Geographical Distribution of the Industrial Population*.
- 1939: The extensive evacuation of children and their teachers decimates the GA autumn programme.

### 1940s

- 1940: The GA postpones the Annual Conference scheduled to be held in London in January. The Conference is held in March 1940 in Blackpool. In December the High School of Commerce in Manchester, containing the GA's Library and Offices, is saved from an air raid fire by the courage of the caretaker, Mr. Sim, who brings the blaze to a halt by working a hose for several hours. The

Land Utilisation Survey, used by the County War Agricultural Executive Committees charged with the task of increasing food production, loses many valuable records in a London air raid.

- 1942: GA Conference is held in April in Exeter, just before the disastrous 'Baedeker' air raids.
- 1943: The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the GA is marked at a GA Conference in Cambridge. Owing to paper shortages, the historical address is not printed until the diamond jubilee celebrations in 1953.
- 1944: Partly stimulated by the 1944 Education Act, the GA's Secondary Schools and Preparatory and Public Schools Committees are reactivated and Branches restarted. The *MacNair Report on Teacher Training* recommends the use of film and broadcast material in schools. The GA argues for more 'real' geography broadcasts.
- 1945: Over 300 geographers including many from the GA have contributed their specialist knowledge to the war effort, especially in cartography, geomorphology, meteorology, climatology and general intelligence. The Naval Intelligence Handbooks – in effect regional geographies - were written by geographers. The new Director of the RGS Lt Col L. P. Kirwin, aided by Leonard Brooks, establishes a new era of co-operation between the three geographical societies (GA, IBG, RGS). The House of the RGS, which escapes undamaged from the war, is made available to both other societies.
- 1946: The Le Play Society and the Geographical Field Group organise a variety of fieldwork visits to Lapland, Norway, Switzerland for GA members.
- 1947: First Post-war GA conference is held in January at the London School of Economics; the spring conference is held in Sheffield. The debate about the introduction of Sociology into the curriculum prompts Professor S.W. Wooldridge to lecture *On taking the 'Ge' out of Geography* (see *Geography* September 1950).

## **PARK LIBRARY, SHEFFIELD: 1947 - 64**

Post war developments force the GA to relinquish its accommodation in Manchester. Dr. Alice Garnett (Honorary Secretary) and Professor David Linton (Honorary Editor) are both based in Sheffield, so a move there is agreed and made possible by the Sheffield City Librarian's generous offer of free office and library space at Park Library, Duke Street.

- 1950: the GA's new offices are officially opened in October.
- 1951: The Public and Preparatory School section of the GA opens its membership to women teachers. *Seven Lamps of Geography* published in the March issue of *Geography*.
- 1952: The GA Secondary Schools Section Committee produces a new *Secondary Handbook*.
- 1953: GA diamond jubilee celebrations are held in Sheffield 26 September. An address is given by Professor Frank Debenham, a survivor of Scott's last Antarctic expedition 1910-1912. A definitive account of the North Sea floods of 1 February 1953 published in *Geography* and *Geography in the Primary School* is also published.

- 1954: Following GA encouragement, geography is brought into line with other subjects in the Civil Service Examination. The Visual Aids Section Committee produces an influential publication, *The Geography Room in the Secondary School* and Section Committees are set up for Urban Spheres and Further Education. *This Changing World* section is introduced in *Geography*.
- 1955: Overseas geography teacher associations from Kenya, Sierra Leone and Jamaica become affiliated with the GA. The Field Studies Section Committee is formed. *Geography* is redesigned with a distinctive red cover. Summer Schools led by the GA are also revived at this time.
- 1958: The GA is involved in a morphological survey of Great Britain leading to the production of morphological maps. *Geography* published in a larger format
- 1959: *Teaching Geography in the Junior School* published. The GA has 56 Branches.

## 1960s

- 1960: The GA becomes a registered charity. Second Land Utilisation Survey launched by Miss Alice Coleman.
- 1961: The Lincolnshire Branch organises the placement of a plaque in the entrance hall of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School 18 February to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Sir Halford Mackinder.

## FULWOOD ROAD, SHEFFIELD 1964 - 1997

The GA's expansion and Sheffield Libraries' plans for the Duke Street Library make it necessary to seek new premises. The University of Sheffield offers a substantial Victorian house at 343 Fulwood Road at a reasonable rent and the GA moves there.

- 1964: Special 'theme' issues of *Geography* are introduced. Nearly disastrous expedition from the Falmouth Spring Conference to the Scilly Isles, in the *SS Scillonian* - one of the roughest passages for many years.
- 1965: The Lord Mayor of Sheffield Officially opens the new GA HQ 11 December. A Standing Committee for Environmental Studies is set up at this time.
- 1966: The Bolton Branch organises two sixth Form Conferences attended by 1,300 sixth formers from 50 schools.
- 1967: 'Role of Models and Quantitative Techniques in Geography Teaching' group formed. *Teaching Geography Occasional Papers* series launched. The first is *A Topic List of Vertical Photographs in the National Air-Photo Libraries* by Alan Walton.
- 1969: Issue of *Geography* on the role of models and quantitative techniques in geography. Special conferences bring members up to date on statistical methods and models in schools. Professor Fleure dies 1 July; the last link with the formative years of the GA. Obituary published in November issue of *Geography*. New *Primary Schools Handbook* published.

## 1970s

- 1970: 152 members join the Trans-Canada Study Tour – the largest and most ambitious tour ever organised by the GA. GA members author many of the *Radiovision* broadcasts by the BBC, first broadcast in this year.
- 1974: Christmas Conferences end due to the introduction of a public holiday on 1 January each year. The *Sir Dudley Stamp Memorial Index to Geography* Volumes 1 to 54 edited by L.L. Jay and Hilary Todd. GA groups are formed to look at the links between schools and higher education and the environment.
- 1975: *Teaching Geography* journal is launched as a more practical guide for teachers. Its first editor is Patrick Bailey. This was at first a joint venture with the Longmans Publishing Group.
- 1976: Easter Conference becomes the main GA Annual Conference.
- 1977: Sheila Jones becomes the first practising teacher to be GA President. A revised GA constitution is introduced. A Council with three standing committees – Finance and General Purposes, Education and Publication and Communications are supported by a number of Section Committees and Working Groups.
- 1977-1979: The GA responds to 'The Great Education Debate' (initiated by James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech in Oxford, October 1976). These include proposals to replace 'A' Levels with Normal and Further levels, which later led to AS and A2 levels.
- 1978: *GA News* is launched - a termly newsletter that later becomes *GA Magazine*. GA members appointed to the Government's Ordnance Survey Review Committee. The Geographical Package Exchange (GAPE) project enables computer software to be produced, listed, reviewed and distributed. This is the forerunner of the ICTWG working group.
- 1979-80: Discussions are held with the BBC and IBA on the content of geography programmes. The GA debates ethnic minorities and geography teaching.

## 1980s

- 1980: The GA responds to the Department of Education and Science proposals on *A Framework for the School Curriculum*, in which Geography is not included as a mandatory core subject; the GA publishes and circulates 50,000 leaflets *Geography and the School Curriculum 5-16*. New *Secondary Handbook* published, edited by Professor Norman Graves.
- 1981: The Council of Subject Teaching Organisations (COSTO), with submissions from the GA, gives evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Education in June. New *Middle School Handbook* published, edited by David Mills and *Geography and the Young School Leaver* (GYSL) by David Boardman.
- 1982: The GA's Fleure Collection is transferred to the University of Sheffield Library.
- 1983: GA Council establishes a board for the in-service education of teachers.
- 1984: WorldWise Quiz initiated by Michael Morrish and Rex Walford. *WorldWise Quiz Book* Number 1 published. The GA International Relations and New Initiatives Funds are established. GA

members monitor media maps for a month during *Mapwatch*; the results are published in *Geography* October 1985.

- 1985: An article in *Geography* (April) by Michael Williams outlines GA actions to fight for the place of geography in the curriculum. On 19 June The Secretary of State the Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph Bt MP addresses an invited GA audience on the place of geography in the school curriculum at King's College, London - the first time a Minister of the Crown speaks directly to the GA in this way. The address is followed by one from Her Majesty's Inspector Trevor Bennetts on *Geography from 5-16: a view from the Inspectorate* (see *Geography* October 1985 and *Teaching Geography* January 1986). *GA News* launches under the editorship of Michael Morrish.
- 1986: The BBC Domesday Project is supported by the GA; a subsequent interactive video project produces a video disk of geography resources for schools.
- 1987: Senior members of the GA meet with Kenneth Baker, the new Secretary of State for Education and Science on 30 June. He indicates that geography will be a foundation subject in its own right and that a Geography Working Group will be set up in 1988 after the three core subjects – English, Maths and Science. *A Case for Geography*, edited by Patrick Bailey and Tony Binns, is published following this meeting.
- 1988: The GA is one of the founding members of the Council for British Geography (COBRIG), which brings geographical bodies across the United Kingdom together. Thematic issues of *Geography* introduced by the editor, Dr D.J. Spooner. GA Awards are introduced, based on an idea from the Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria, Australia.
- 1989: The National Curriculum Working Group includes well known GA members including Eleanor Rawling, Rex Walford, Michael Storm and K. Edwards. The National Curriculum is published but the GA considers that some of the science content would more properly reside in geography. *Primary Geographer* is launched and Wendy Morgan becomes its first editor. The National Education Resources Information Project (NERIS) is hosted and operated by the GA to produce reviews of educational resources which can be accessed remotely.

## 1990s

- 1990: Thirteen Regional Conferences set up by the GA to help consult with members on the National Curriculum for Geography, with responses sent to the Secretary of State. Three thousand members participate.
- 1991: Kenneth Clarke announces 4 January that only core subjects will be obligatory at Key Stage 4, which the GA regards as a negative step. The Draft Order for Geography published 14 January reduces by about one third the amount schools are expected to teach compared with the Geography Working Group's recommendations. The National Curriculum in Geography is launched on 24 September.
- 1993: GA centenary celebrations addressed by HRH Princess Royal, who also tours an exhibition about the GA in Sheffield University's Great Hall. *The Geographical Association – The First Hundred Years* by Prof. W. Balchin maps the GA's progress 1893-1993. GA membership exceeds 10,000.
- 1995: *Teaching Geography* published in full colour. Previously only the cover pages were in colour.

- 1996: The GA mobilises 1,500 schools and 50,000 people to take part in Land Use UK. *Geography Teacher's Handbook* is published, edited by Patrick Bailey and Peter Fox. The first annual *Geography Action Week* is launched.

## **SOLLY STREET, SHEFFIELD: 1997 - present**

The GA moves to 160 Solly Street, a building with the office and warehouse space needed for the GA's publishing activities. Initially the building is rented from a private landlord. In 2010 the GA purchases the property, confirming the GA's commitment to Sheffield.

- 1997: Official opening of the Solly Street offices by President Wendy Morgan. *Post-16 Geography* published, edited by Andrew Powell.
- 1998: The GA appoints its first Chief Executive, Martin Curry. GA website launched. New *Primary Handbook* published, edited by Roger Carter.
- 1999: *Barnaby Bear* brand launched.

### **2000s**

- 2000: A 'primary day' included in the Annual Conference programme. Coastline 2000 project sees schools collecting data on different stretches of the UK coastline.
- 2001: *Changing the Subject – the impact of national policy on school geography 1980-2000* by Eleanor Rawling published.
- 2002: David Lambert appointed GA Chief Executive. GA online shop launched.
- 2003: *Learning through Enquiry* by Margaret Roberts published. GA Conference begins its rotation between the south, Midlands and north and cements its status as the UK's largest gathering of geography teachers. Two 'Why Argue?' curriculum projects develop 'argumentation' skills within geography, English and science.
- 2003-6: The *Valuing Places* curriculum development project is funded by DfID and led for the GA by Diane Swift. The Training and Development Agency (TDA) fund the GA to produce Geography Teaching into Practice (GTIP) on-line CPD materials. The project runs until 2011.
- 2004: The Geography Development Fund announced at the Canterbury Annual Conference by Schools Minister Stephen Twigg.
- 2005: *GA Magazine* (incorporating GA News) is launched.
- 2006: GA governance is reformed: Governing Body replaces Council and Education Committee replaces standing Committees. The Presidents' Group established as an executive committee of the Governing Body. A GA e-newsletter is launched.
- 2006-8: the Academy for Sustainable Communities fund the GA's 'Where shall I live?'



and 'Places we want' projects.

- 2006-11: The Action Plan for Geography (APG), a Government funded project, is led jointly and equally by the GA and the RGS-IBG. There are eight project lines including the *Geography Teaching Today* website. GA primary and secondary Geography Quality Marks introduced, initially as part of the APG. David Lambert appointed as a geography education adviser to the Secretary of State.
- 2007: September launch of a dedicated WorldWide Quiz website and new 'My Place' picture gallery. The GA re-introduces Honorary Vice Presidents.
- 2007-10: The GA leads the national subject support geography subject line for the introduction of a revised ('concept-led') KS3 programme of study.
- 2008: *Geography Teachers' Toolkits* published, initially for KS3 (later for GCSE and primary). These take on the curriculum-making philosophy developed under the APG. *Geography* journal redesigned with a full colour format and editorial collective. GA online social networking launched through 'Nings' and Twitter. Primary Champions active nationwide as part of the APG project.
- 2009: The GA's manifesto for geography, *A Different View*, expresses the enduring and contemporary role of geography in education and the approach the GA advocates for teacher and curriculum support and development. A meeting room dedicated to Patrick Bailey is opened at Solly Street. GA Working Groups are renamed Special Interest Groups.

## 2010s

- 2010: The GA purchases its Solly Street building and becomes a company limited by guarantee and a new charity. The official opening (5 November) is by the Rt. Hon. David Blunkett MP. The GA responds to the Rose Review of the Primary National Curriculum. Strategic partnerships with the Field Studies Council, Ordnance Survey and ESRI (UK) are announced. The GA's Facebook social networking site is launched and *Teaching Geography* is redesigned.
- 2011: The GA responds to a National Curriculum Review and meets with the school's minister to explore the notion of 'core' knowledge. A low-cost subscription to *GA Magazine* introduced. *Primary Geographer* renamed *Primary Geography*. A GA consultancy service is based on a register of Consultants to the GA.
- 2012: The GA appoints Alan Kinder as its Chief Executive. The GA publishes its proposals for a new national curriculum in geography and the results of a national consultation exercise on these. As a lead partner in the Development Education Consortium, the GA wins funding from the Department for International Development to run a five-year Global Learning Programme to engage half the schools across England with global learning. An online archive of *The Geographical Teacher* (from 1901) and *Geography*

(from 1927) becomes available.

- 2012 – 14: The GA advises Government on the development of a new national curriculum and GCSE, as part of its Geography Expert Group.
- 2013: The GA becomes a lead partner in the Global Learning Programme for Wales and a partner in the international Geocapabilities project.
- 2014: The GA launches its new 5-year Strategic Plan, which aims primarily to meet professional and educational needs and to demonstrate the value of geography. The GA represents teachers on the geography panel of the A Level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB) and runs consultation events to collect teachers' views on the content of revised A levels from 2016.
- 2014: The GA begins a series of partnerships with major publishers in order to provide high quality text book materials for the reformed national curriculum and qualifications in geography.
- 2015: The first GA National Research Report published: *Geography Initial Teacher Education and supply in England*, gaining national publicity for the emerging crisis in teacher supply. The GA publishes its *Assessment and progression framework for geography*, setting out a system for assessment 5-16. *Teaching Geography* celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday by making its archive from 1975 available online. *Geography* celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> volume.
- 2015-16: the GA advises awarding organisations (AOs) and Ofqual on the content of new GCSEs and A levels in Geography from 2016 and runs national conferences to introduce these qualifications to teachers, in partnership with AOs. The GA is a founding partner of the Year of Fieldwork and becomes a key stakeholder in the creation of the Government's 25-year environment strategy.
- 2016: The GA expands its national CPD programme for teachers on behalf of the British Council's Connecting Classrooms project. This enhances the teaching of critical thinking and problem solving in the context of geography education. A secondary fieldwork survey and survey of primary geography education both receive hundreds of responses from schools. The GA announces a new strategic partnership, with Discover the World Education (DTWE).
- 2017: The 1000<sup>th</sup> Geography Quality Mark is awarded. The GA website is re-designed and relaunched.
- 2018: The GA celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Annual Conference takes place in Sheffield and an anniversary lunch is accompanied by a series of reflective articles and timelines of the GA's work. The GA Initiatives Fund is launched to give geography teachers opportunities to further geographical knowledge and understanding through education. GA Ugandan Branch founded. The GA publishes its second National Research Report: *Geography and Global Learning* and becomes a lead partner in the Connecting

Classrooms through Global Learning programmes across England and Wales.

- 2019: A Free Primary Membership grade is launched, attracting thousands of new members in its first year. The GA launches a Professional Passport, to support and recognise teachers of geography who reflect critically on their professional development.

## 2020s

- 2020: Annual conference takes place online, in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The GA's Critical Thinking for Achievement project enables more than 1,000 teachers from nearly 400 schools serving communities of greatest need across England to increase their skills in the critical use of data and construction of evidenced arguments. The GA launches its new strategic plan, for the period 2020-25.
- 2022: GA membership exceeds 10,000 for the first time since 1993.
- 2023: The GA wins a competitive tender to supply Oak National Academy with an extensive suite of teaching materials for primary geography teachers over the following two years.

*GA 2011. Reviewed and updated March 2023.*

*Acknowledgements: The GA wishes to thank Peter Fox for his assistance in writing this chronology. The main source was Balchin, W. (1993) *The Geographical Association: The First Hundred Years 1893–1993*. Sheffield: Geographical Association.*

*Any additions or corrections would be most welcome.*