

# Picturing the past

With some of the first photographs ever taken in far-flung locations, world-renowned images and artwork from the Golden Age of travel and exploration, and depictions of modern-day science and geographical research, the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)'s picture library is one of the most important collections of its kind. Holding more than half a million photographs, artworks, negatives, lantern slides and albums, this rich source of images is open to all, and is used by thousands of people around the world, who access it both online and in person.

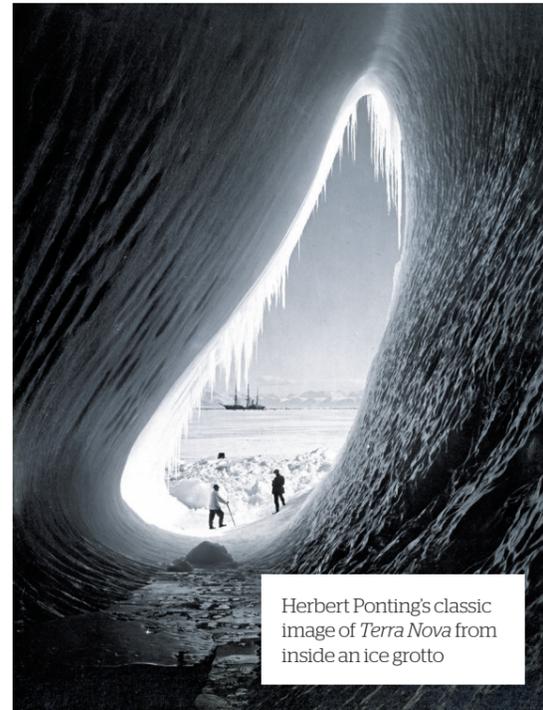
Many of the images today play an important role in contemporary science and modern-day research, enabling geographers to demonstrate the extent of change in cultures, people and landscapes since the turn of the century. In November last year, for example, the NGO GlacierWorks illustrated the losses and changes to glaciers in the Greater Himalaya at an exhibition at the Society. The organisation's executive director, the filmmaker and mountaineer David Breashears, was able to compare his own contemporary photographs with 1920s images from the picture library to show how the environment is changing.

And at an exhibition earlier this year, the architect Sandra Piesik used early-20th-century photographs of buildings and sites on the Arabian Peninsula from the Society's photographic collection to illustrate the 7,000-year history of a unique, indigenous craft - palm-leaf architecture - an essential, but rapidly disappearing part of the United Arab Emirates' history. In particular, she used the archive images to help demonstrate how palm-leaf architecture is closely connected to the religious, cultural and agricultural traditions of the Arabian Peninsula.

The library is a rich source of historical images of international significance. Among these are Herbert Ponting's remarkable pictures telling the story behind Captain Scott's scientific discoveries, Frank Hurley's photographs of Ernest Shackleton's incredible Antarctic struggle and original negatives and colour slides of all nine British expeditions to Mount Everest between 1921 and 1953.

'There are so many fabulous stories told through the picture library that bring to life the pioneering journeys of Livingstone, Mallory and Hillary, to name a few,' says Jamie Owen, the library's sales manager. 'The unique collection is used by a vast range of people worldwide and is an unparalleled resource for everyone from researchers and journalists to historians and academics.'

The online picture library is a first port of call for filmmakers, writers and publishers across the world. Here



Herbert Ponting's classic image of *Terra Nova* from inside an ice grotto

you can explore the Society's geographical and thematic galleries to uncover the real breadth of the collection, as well as search for material on famous explorers and travellers. Many visitors discover inspiring images of people and places from around the globe, and the resource can be used to contrast imagery from a bygone era of exploration with modern expedition photography.

The website covers every continent, and themes include agriculture and industry, landscape and environment, people and culture, and plants and animals. Anyone can access the photos and order their own iconic prints from A1 to A4 sizes. Indeed, our photos have been used in an array of publications, biographies, historical accounts, educational text books and television documentaries.

You can see many of these items by visiting the Society and by registering as a Foyle Reading Room user. You can also attend specially organised picture library events. The next events showcase recent acquisitions from Fellows and members of the Society and take place on 29 October and 5 November. Both events start at 2.30pm and are free to attend for members and £5 for non-members. Booking is essential.

■ To view the picture library, visit [www.rgs.org/images](http://www.rgs.org/images)

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) promotes enjoyment and understanding of our world. Membership is open to all. You may use geography in your profession, have a thirst for geographical knowledge or a passion for travel. Geographical is the Society's magazine and is available as part of membership. To find out more, call the Membership Office on 020 7591 3080



## ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY (WITH IBG)

### SELECTION OF EVENTS FOR OCTOBER

**4 October, 6.30pm**

**The hazards of geography: earthquakes and landslides**  
(Lecture, Hammersmith)

Drawing on his experiences of working in Nepal, Pakistan, China and New Zealand after recent earthquakes, Professor David Petley explores the ways in which social and natural processes combine to generate disasters. Venue: Edward Latymer Theatre, Latymer Upper School, 237 King Street, Hammersmith, London, W6 9LR.

📍 Tickets: free but admission by ticket only. For further details, email Mike Ashby: [mca@latymer-upper.org](mailto:mca@latymer-upper.org)

**5 October, 7.30pm**

**Food security and environmental change: a two-way street**  
(Lecture, Lancaster)

Dr John Ingram of the University of Oxford discusses how the environment is affected by our attempts to achieve food security and some of the ways in which environmental change undermines that security. Joint event with Lancaster Environment Centre (LEC), Lancaster University. Venue: Biology Lecture Theatre, LEC, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4QY.

📍 Tickets are free. Call 01524 592 976 or email [lec.office@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:lec.office@lancaster.ac.uk)

**10 October, 7.45pm**

**Hardest ice climb**  
(Lecture, Taunton)

Tim Emmett gives a hair-raising insight into the new world of ice and mixed climbing, including his experience of the notorious Helmcken Falls cave in Canada. Venue: The Brewhouse Theatre, Coal Orchard, Taunton, TA1 1JL.

📍 For further details, visit [www.thebrewhouse.net](http://www.thebrewhouse.net)



**10-18 October**

**Survivors of the Ice Age: Alice Roberts**  
(Lecture, Stamford, King's Lynn, Southampton)

From mammoth extinction to human survival, Alice Roberts explores a global tale of life and death, drawing on her research and travels while making such BBC TV series as *The Incredible Human Journey*. Venues: 10 October, 2pm and 8pm, Stamford Arts Centre; 12 October, 7.30pm, King's Lynn Arts Centre; 18 October, 8pm, Turner Sims, Southampton.

📍 For further details, visit [www.rgs.org/whatson](http://www.rgs.org/whatson)

**11 October, 5.30pm for 6.30pm start**

**Flourishing fantasies of the Arctic: from 'pygmies' to the Vinland map by Kirsten Andresen Seaver**  
(Annual EGR Taylor Lecture, London)

An historian of early North Atlantic exploration and colonisation, Kirsten Andresen Seaver reflects on EGR Taylor's interest in how the Europeans of antiquity and the Middle Ages conceived of the Arctic.

📍 Lecture tickets are free. Supper tickets cost £25 and must be purchased by midday 5 October. To book, please call the Events Office on 020 7591 3100

**24 October, 7pm**

**A celebration of Patrick Leigh Fermor with Colin Thubron and Artemis Cooper**  
(Lecture, London)

Marking the publication of her new biography, *Patrick Leigh Fermor: An Adventure*, Artemis Cooper talks to Colin Thubron about their mutual friend, perhaps the greatest travel writer of the 20th century. Joint lecture with the Royal Society of Literature.

📍 Tickets: RGS-IBG members £7, non-members £10. For further details, visit [www.rgs.org/publicevents](http://www.rgs.org/publicevents)

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) is a leading world centre for geographers and geographical learning. One of our aims is to stimulate the awareness and enjoyment of the subject to a diverse range of people.

Geography is about the understanding of the people, places and environments of our world, the processes by which they are changing, and the interconnections between them - both locally and globally.

The Society carries out a wide range of activities to support its aims. We support research groups; promote geography within the national curriculum; produce scholarly publications; provide training in scientific field techniques and expeditions; offer information through our large map collection, library and picture library; and engage the wider public through our popular national lecture series.

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