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# The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

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Royal  
Geographical  
Society  
with IBG

# Introduction

Geography is, in the broadest sense, an education for life and for living.

– *Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)*

Where we live. Where we work. Who we are. Our world as we know it today.

The fundamental tenets of our society—people, cultures, places, environment—and how they interact and influence each other are at the core of the geographic discipline. Those that came before us—the likes of Shackleton, of Livingstone, of Hillary, of Bell and many more—not only traced and discovered parts unknown, but they did not so much with the promise of success, but the incredible probability of failure.

From the role of women to colonialism in Africa, this lookbook demonstrates the interdisciplinary scope of geographical research and provides a window into the foremost geographers and expeditions of our time.

To learn more about the stories in the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Collection, visit [wileydigitalarchives.com/rgs](https://wileydigitalarchives.com/rgs).

# Colonialism in Africa



## FILE THIS UNDER

Geography, African Studies, Colonial History, Cartography, Anthropology, International Relations, Economic History



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Throughout the nineteenth century, maps of Africa became symbols of British missionary, scientific and imperial endeavour. No meeting concerning Africa – whether to promote missionary activity, to debate the location of rivers and lakes, or to contemplate imperial schemes – was complete without a large map of the continent. Founded in 1830, the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) served as an information exchange for explorers, soldiers, administrators and naturalists, providing intelligence and advice for a range of government departments; its extensive map room was a frequent source of information for the military.

*River Shire from Lake Nyassa to the Sea. The River Shire from the Murchison Cataracts to the River Zambezi Reduced from an Original by Dr. Livingstone and Mr. Thornton. [1867].” Map, 1867. Wiley Digital Archives.*



## WHO

David Livingstone, generally considered to be the most famous European explorer of Africa in the 19th century



## WHY HE'S NOTABLE

David Livingstone (1813 – 1873), a Scottish physician, scientific explorer, imperial reformer, anti-slavery crusader, and Christian missionary, created many of the first maps of Africa that live in the RGS-IBG archives today. One of the most popular British heroes of the late 19th-century Victorian era, he was an advocate of commercial and colonial expansion as a means to replace the slave trade he detested with a legitimate form of commerce.

Livingstone's obsession with learning the sources of the Nile River was founded on the belief that the discovery would give him the influence to end the East African Arab-Swahili slave trade during the culmination of the classic period of European geographical discovery and colonial penetration of Africa.

His missionary travels and eventual death in Africa led to the founding of several major central African Christian missionary initiatives in the era of the European "Scramble for Africa."



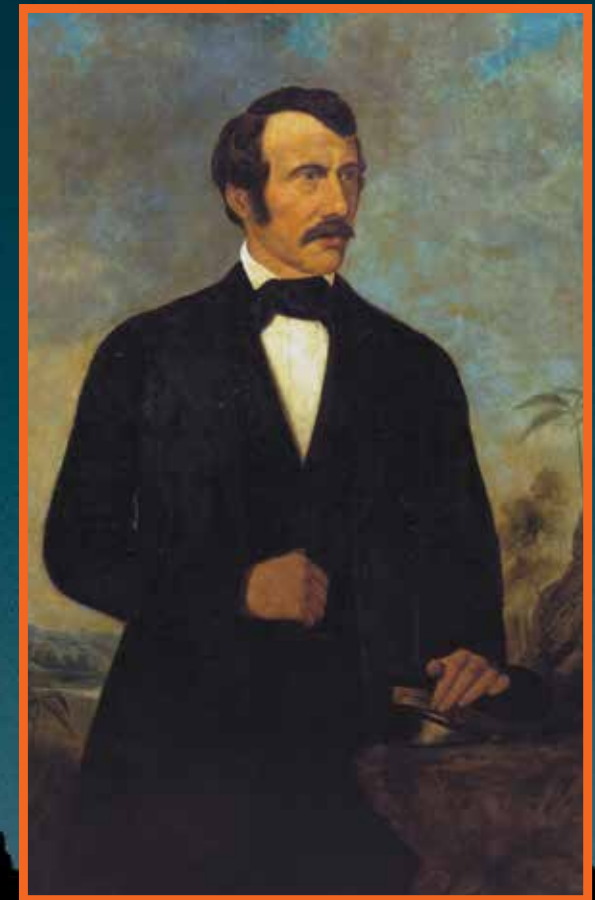
## EXPEDITION HIGHLIGHTS

Livingstone's passion for exploring Africa wasn't without challenges. In 1858, Livingstone set out on the Zambezi Expedition to examine the resources of southeastern Africa and open up the Zambezi River. His crew consisted of several members: his brother Charles, a photographer; John Kirk, a botanist; Richard Thornton, a geologist; and **Thomas Baines**, the official artist.

Riddled with illness and drama amongst the crew, the Zambezi Expedition was by no means smooth sailing. After an argument that led to both Thornton's and Baines' dismissal, Livingstone's steamer, the Ma Robert, began leaking, forcing members to continue on foot. They changed course to travel along the River Shire, Lake Nyassa and the Rovuma but still faced obstacles with navigation and the encroachment of local Africans and slave traders.

At this point, Livingstone's wife Mary joined her husband but contracted malaria and died. Subsequently, Livingstone faced the threat of mutiny when he dragged the steamer over miles of sandbanks before being ordered home by the British government with disappointing results.

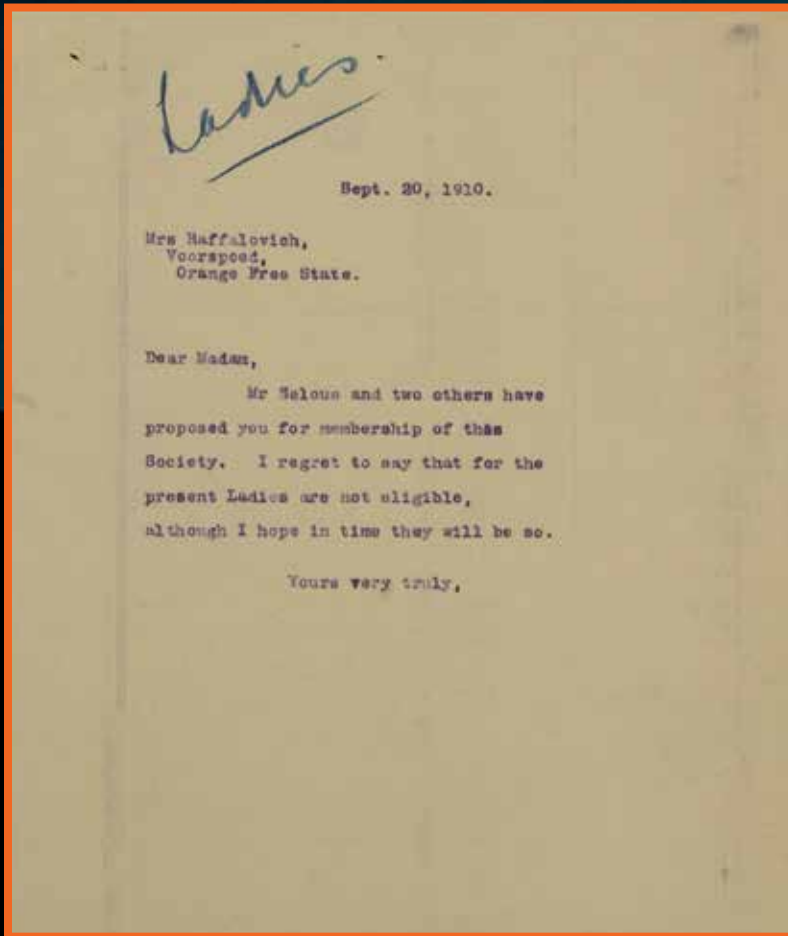
Though the failure to circumnavigate and fully navigate the lake was a major disappointment to British geographers, the Expedition brought back some profitable results, including various botanical and zoological specimens.



Craig, Alexander. "David Livingstone (1813-1873)." RGS Images Online, 1 Jan. 1856. Wiley Digital Archives.

**Related items & special collections in the RGS-IBG Archive:** Maps, manuscripts, Livingstone's account of his search for the source of the Nile, **historic photographs**, accounts and artworks of pioneering journeys of Livingstone, **Samuel Baker, John Hanning Speke, Richard Francis Burton**, and more.

# Women Explorers



## FILE THIS UNDER

Women Explorers, Women in the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), Gender Studies, Middle East, Iraq, Asia, Europe, Desert, Geopolitics, World War I



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The late 19th century to the early 20th century was not an easy time to be a woman in science. Females were ostensibly barred membership from professional and academic societies—institutions that were integral to accessing the resources and networks necessary to advance their discoveries and careers. Access itself did not guarantee equality either; while 1913 marked the first time that the RGS-IBG recognized the capacity of women to produce geographical knowledge and their right to apply for membership, their acceptance generally boiled down to expertise, experience and sociability—qualities that were inherently difficult to achieve based on the limited opportunities afforded to them.

*Correspondence and Notes/Printed Does Re Admission of Women. Newscuttings Re Selection of Women." Additional Papers, 1809–1915. Wiley Digital Archives.*



## WHO

Gertrude Bell (aka Queen of the Desert)



## WHY SHE'S NOTABLE

Even if all odds weren't stacked against her as a woman, Gertrude Bell's accomplishments would still stand in a league of their own. While it can't be denied that her upper-middle class background opened doors to resources and networks that would have otherwise been denied to her, it was Bell's courage, fearlessness, inquisitiveness, and knowledge as an explorer that ultimately enabled her to achieve her legendary status in history.

Detailed in expedition reports, letters, photos and published books, Bell's extensive travel through the cities and deserts of the Middle East revealed the contours of the Arabian world to the western world for the very first time. Her intimate familiarity and knowledge of the region's unique terrain and its varied indigenous population were instrumental to shaping British imperial policy in the early 20th century, making her the only woman to successfully exercise political power throughout the critical years of the first World War.

Gertrude Bell is perhaps best known for her contribution to the Conference in Cairo in 1921, where she played a major role in establishing and helping administer the modern state of Iraq, using her unique perspective from her travels and relations with tribal leaders throughout the Middle East. Further, the National Museum of Iraq and the National Library of Iraq were born in significant part from her vision and advocacy, as Bell strongly advocated the belief that relics and antiquities should be preserved in their home nations.

Primary evidence of Bell's experiences reflect the divisive forces at work in the Middle East and are relevant to the struggles still faced there today.



*J. Weston & Son. "Gertrude Bell." RGS Images Online, 1 Jan. 1900. Wiley Digital Archives.*

**Related items & special collections in the RGS-IBG Archive:** Gertrude Bell's notebooks, archaeological drawings, maps, personal letters, diaries and more. Diaries, field notes, photos and other critical primary source materials illuminate Bell's contemporaries as well, including Isabella Bird, *Mary Kingsley*, Lady Hester Stanhope, Elizabeth Ness, *Freya Stark*, Gertrude Caton-Thompson, Louise Boyd, Phyllis Wager and more.

# Polar Exploration



## FILE THIS UNDER

Heroic Age of Exploration, Antarctica, Geopolitics, Geography, Cartography, Anthropology, Meteorology, Magnetism, Environmental Studies, Climate Change



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Antarctica is one of the most remote places on Earth, and was the last continent to be explored. In the decades following the first landing on Antarctica in 1821, curiosity of the unknown region accelerated exponentially. By 1895, the International Geographical Congress declared the region to be “the greatest piece of geographical exploration.” The Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration began at the end of the 19th century and closed with Ernest Shackleton’s Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition in 1917. During this period the Antarctic continent became the focus of an international effort that resulted in intensive scientific and geographical exploration and in which 17 major Antarctic expeditions were launched from 10 countries. The prize of the Heroic Age was to reach the South Pole.

Hurley, Frank. “Endurance’ in the Ice in Full Sail.” RGS Images Online, 1 Jan. 1914. Wiley Digital Archives.



## WHO

Ernest Shackleton, one of the principal figures of the period known as the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration.

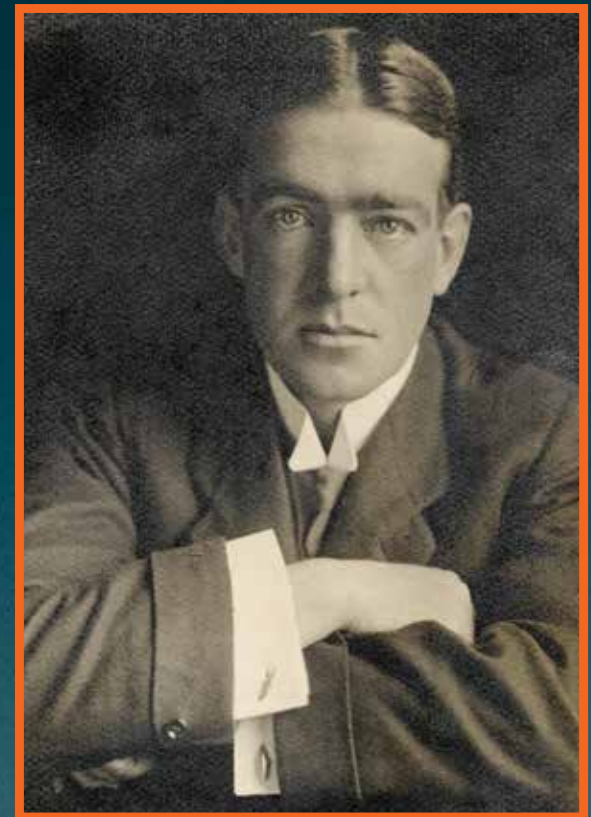


## WHY HE'S NOTABLE

In 1914, Ernest Shackleton led the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition with the aim of setting a record by crossing Antarctica via the South Pole.

Unfortunately, their ship, the *Endurance*, was trapped and crushed by pack ice before they even stepped foot on Antarctica. The crew abandoned the ship, and Shackleton ordered each of the 27 men to dump all but two pounds of personal possessions before the *Endurance* eventually sank. Shackleton and all of the expedition members then embarked on an epic journey on lifeboats over packed ice to Elephant Island, where they stood on solid ground for the first time in 497 days.

In the hopes of securing help from a whaling station, Shackleton and five expedition members then sailed one lifeboat to South Georgia with very little hope of survival, food or shelter. They arrived at the whaling station, where they sounded the alarm and borrowed a ship to sail back to Elephant Island to rescue his men and depart from Antarctica, 24 months and 22 days after leaving England. Miraculously, all 27 expedition members survived through extreme conditions. This tale of heroic failure has been described as the greatest survival story of all time.



Mills, H. Ernest. "Sir Ernest Shackleton." RGS Images Online, 1 Jan. 1909. Wiley Digital Archives.

**Related items & special collections in the RGS-IBG Archive:** Maps, manuscripts, *historic photographs* from the great Antarctic adventures of Ernest Shackleton and *Robert Falcon Scott*, expedition reports, a volume charting changes in the ice shelves of Antarctica, personal items formerly belonging to some of the world's greatest explorers, such as Shackleton's Burberry® helmet, and more.



# Everest Expeditions



*Various Newspaper Cuttings and Photographs, 1924 Expedition." Everest Expeditions, 5 May 1921. Wiley Digital Archives.*



## FILE THIS UNDER

Exploration, Mount Everest Expeditions, Nepal, China, Geopolitics, Geography, Cartography, Anthropology, Environmental Studies, Photography, Climate Change, Decolonizing Western Narratives



## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mount Everest is Earth's highest mountain above sea level, located on the crest of the Great Himalayas. The international border between Nepal and China runs across its summit point. In 1921, the first British expedition was organized and financed by the newly formed Mount Everest Committee, with the goal of mapping and reconnaissance to discover whether a route to the summit could be found. Several expeditions took place in the early 20th century as climbers attempted to reach the summit, facing medical issues, exhaustion, lack of oxygen, inexperience and even death.



## WHO

Edmund Hillary, credited as the first man to step foot on the summit of Mount Everest.



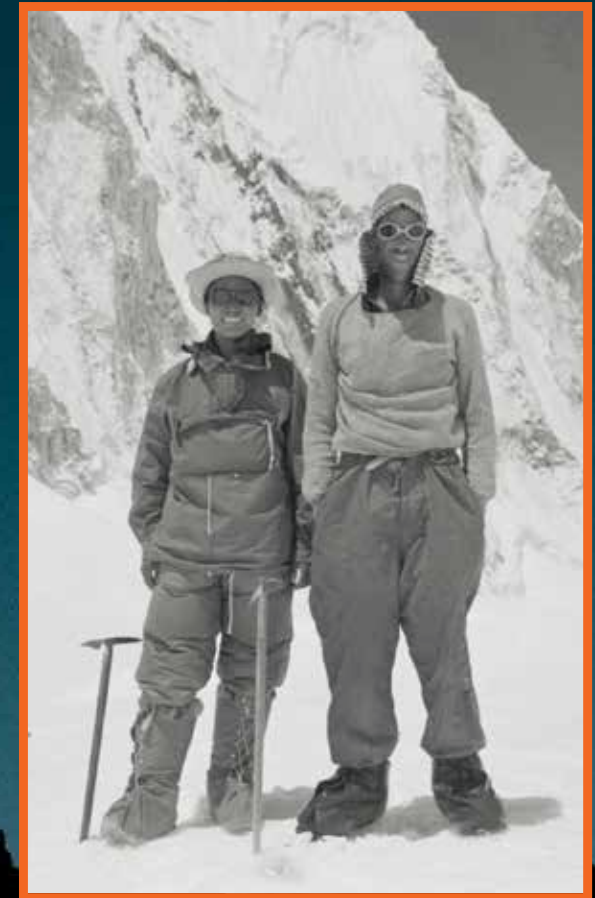
## WHY HE'S NOTABLE

In 1953, the ninth expedition to Mount Everest began, organized and paid for by the Joint Himalayan Committee. Wilfrid Noyce and Annullu had created a path to the South Col before, and two climbing teams were formed to attempt to reach the summit via this path, with Charles Evans and Tom Bourdillon serving as the first pair to set off. While they were successful in reaching the South summit, they were unable to complete their trek due to problems with their equipment.

Just two days later, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the second pair to take a turn, and with the aid of standard oxygen equipment, they reached the summit on May 29, 1953. They had used the South Col route. During their very brief time at the summit of Mount Everest, they stopped to take some photographs and also buried some sweets underneath the snow.

Over the years there has been one question that has plagued this huge achievement. Many people were confused as to which out of the two was actually the first to set foot on the summit of Mount Everest. Although there was a lot of speculation, Tenzing stated that it was, in fact, Edmund Hillary. As a result, Hillary was credited as the first man to actually step foot on Mount Everest and was subsequently awarded a knighthood for his achievement.

Hillary and Tenzing's success marked 32 years since the first Everest expedition was organized, and thousands more have joined the ranks since.



Gregory, Alfred. "Full Length Portrait of Hillary and Tenzing." RGS Images Online, 1 Mar. 1953. Wiley Digital Archives.

**Related items & special collections in the RGS-IBG Archive:** Maps, manuscripts, historic photographs, expedition reports, personal items formerly belonging to some of the world's greatest explorers, accounts of the journeys of Edmund Hillary, Tenzing Norgay, George Mallory, Charles Bruce, Edward Norton, Maurice Wilson, paraphernalia of exploration, for example, *oxygen sets* used in the various attempts on Everest and more.

# About the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Archive

Wiley Digital Archives' Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) archive spans all aspects of geographical thought and includes materials from the society's library, as well as its extensive archives and maps collections. Over a hundred thousand maps and charts are complemented by manuscript material, fieldnotes, correspondence, drawings, photographs, pamphlets, atlases, gazetteers, and a range of other published and unpublished material.

The archive sheds light on the impact of geographical science on history, exploration, colonialism, and diplomatic policies, as well as natural resources, cultural studies, anthropology, and ethnography. Researchers can explore one of the world's largest private collections of maps and charts from their earliest geographical delineations, dating from 1486 to the 20th century, as well as atlases and gazetteers. The collections in this archive create new pathways for interdisciplinary research and education, while, at the same time, preserving one of the world's most important geographical archives.

Visit [wileydigitalarchives.com/rgs](https://wileydigitalarchives.com/rgs) to learn more about the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Archive.