

# Mapping *Terra Incognita*: Women's Participation in Royal Geographical Society-Supported Expeditions 1913-1939

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**ABSTRACT:** Within and beyond feminist historical geography, research into female travellers and women's travel writing represents an extensive and flourishing field of historical geography. Drawing on this literature, and on recent work on women and geographical societies, this paper considers a particular aspect of women's relationships with the Royal Geographical Society of London in the early to mid twentieth century. Drawing on extensive archival research in the RGS-IBG collections, this paper maps out women's participation in RGS-supported expeditions between 1913 and 1939, and sketches out some of the routes that they employed to participate in these expeditions. It argues that while some high-profile women made the most of their Fellowship and social and professional connections with the RGS, applying directly to the Society to gain support for their planned expeditionary work, other women continued to make use of other networks and opportunities available to them, without direct contact with the Society. Importantly, for many of these women this included drawing on existing familial-social networks

## Introduction

It is now twenty-five years since Mona Domosh first sketched out the possibilities then opening up of "a feminist historiography of geography," and what this could mean for histories of the discipline.<sup>1</sup> At the time of her intervention, the history of geography was undergoing something of a renaissance, with the then-novel contextual approach being adopted by a number of historical geographers.<sup>2</sup> Some of these contextual histories positioned expeditionary fieldwork and exploration at the heart of the nascent and developing discipline, presenting it as the central, and hegemonic, form of geographical knowledge production, but without directly considering women's engagement with this form of geographical thought and practice, or even including women in their histories of the discipline, beyond a small number of token acknowledgements. In contrast, Domosh argued for the inclusion of female explorers and travellers within histories of geography, and within the history of the exploratory tradition, noting their exclusion from existing works even when they conformed to the standards of making a contribution to geographical knowledge cited in these histories.<sup>3</sup>

In the quarter century which followed Domosh's pioneering article, there has been a tremendous flowering of research undertaken from feminist perspectives, both within histories of geographical thought and practice, and in the wider field of historical geography. Much of this work within feminist historical geography has continued to draw on the experiences of female explorers and travellers, seeking to situate them within the wider history of both expeditionary work and of geography more broadly, and concentrating on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Such work draws on and contributes to an extensive and wide-ranging literature on women travellers and women's travel writing, which has continued to flourish within and beyond geography, particularly within literature studies.<sup>5</sup> Another key strand has focused on women's

geographical work more broadly, and particularly their interactions with university geography departments<sup>6</sup> and with national and regional geographical societies. This focus has included the American geographical societies,<sup>7</sup> and the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) of London.<sup>8</sup>

In this paper I wish to draw these strands together to consider a particular dataset of women engaging in expeditionary work in the early to mid twentieth century, mapping out women's participation in RGS-supported expeditions between 1913 and 1939, and drawing on previous research on the collections of the RGS-IBG. It will adopt a "more-than-contextual" approach,<sup>9</sup> that not only acknowledges the necessity of placing individual's experiences and work within the wider socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts which constitute the milieu within which they operated, but which insists upon also using theoretical and methodological tools from feminist and other perspectives to better unpack and understand those contexts. This includes the importance of considering gender—both in terms of discursive concepts, and of lived embodied experience—as an important structuring context for the production of geographical knowledge.

The paper will situate individual expeditions within the wider trends around women's expeditionary participation. In particular, it will examine women's network participation and processes of accreditation, within an analysis of the RGS as a collection of interlinked and sometimes competing networks. It will consider in turn three major criteria key to gaining RGS support: expertise, including education and particular qualifications; experience, in terms of previous expeditionary work or travel of the kind proposed; and appropriate sociability and network participation, which I have described as fellowship/Fellowship, considering both senses of the term.<sup>10</sup> It will examine both direct and indirect applications from women, and will highlight the importance of their participation in RGS-based networks, and in other institutional and familial networks. The participation of these women is often not mentioned in the official archives of the RGS, such as the Council and Committee minutes. Instead, evidence of their participation has been uncovered from brief references in subsequent lectures and reviews of publications, and from other published accounts of the expeditions. These mentions usually do little more than establish the fact of a woman's presence, although occasionally they make reference to her role on the expedition. As a result, it has been necessary to cross-reference with other secondary material, including obituaries and entries in biographical dictionaries.

The research upon which this paper draws took as its starting point the permanent admission of women to the Fellowship of the RGS in 1913.<sup>11</sup> This moment can be read in two ways. It can be seen as the crossing of a symbolic Rubicon, which represented a step of profound symbolic importance for the public image of the RGS and for women's status within geography.<sup>12</sup> It permitted elected women to access the resources, spaces, and networks of the Society in their own right, rather than having to go through male proxies; it also recognised the capacity of women for producing geographical knowledge, and their right to be recognised as having that status.<sup>13</sup> However, it is also important to acknowledge that access alone does not guarantee equality. The decision to admit women can also be read, in terms of women's access to the support and spaces of the male-dominated RGS, more as a diffuse and permeable frontier zone. Within this frontier zone, there were both significant breaks and continuities with the pre-Fellowship period, with many women continuing to access expeditionary space through male proxies.<sup>14</sup> The paper will argue that while some high-profile women made the most of their Fellowship and social and professional connections with the RGS, applying directly to the Society to gain support for their planned expeditionary work, other women continued to make use of other networks and opportunities available to them, without direct contact with the Society.

### **Mapping terra incognita: 1913-1939**

Between 1913 and 1939 there were 397 applications for support to the RGS from expeditions; forty-two were for projects that included a female participant (10.6 percent).<sup>15</sup> During

this period there were a number of different types of RGS-supported expeditions. These included expeditions that the RGS had organised or agreed to substantially sponsor; expeditions organised and sponsored by other learned societies, such as the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI); and a handful of university-backed undergraduate and research staff expeditions. A number of applications were also from 'private' expeditions; that is, expeditions without direct institutional origin, although members of these expeditions were often closely networked with universities and learned societies, from which the expeditions often received support and sanction. During this period, applications were considered by the RGS Council as they came in throughout the year. Over the course of the 1930s this responsibility was gradually devolved to the Research and Expeditions Committees.<sup>16</sup> Although the Finance Committee kept an eye on the amount of

**Table 1:** Women applying directly to the RGS for expeditionary support

	<b>Name of female participants</b>	<b>Form of support</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Destination</b>
1	Gertrude Bell	Approval, gift of instrument	1913	Hayyil, Arabia
2	Wilhelmina Elizabeth Ness	No support given (requested letter of introduction)	1920	South America
3	Rosita Forbes	Approval, loan of instruments	1921	Mecca, Arabia
4	Winifred Blackman	No support given (requested approval)	1924	Egypt
5	Gertrude Caton-Thompson and Elinor Gardner	Approval, training	1925	Fayum, Egypt
6	Mrs Scott-Brown	No support given (requested retrospective grant or award)	1926	Kalambo Falls, Africa
7	Gertrude Caton-Thompson and Elinor Gardner	Approval, grant of £25	1927	Fayum, Egypt
8	Margaret Hasluck	Approval, loan of instruments	1929	Albania
9	Gertrude Caton-Thompson and Elinor Gardner	Approval, grant of £5/year for 3 years	1930	Kharga Oasis, Egypt
10	Freya Stark	Approval, training	1931	Luristan, Persia
11	Louise Boyd	No support given? (requested approval)	1931	Canadian Arctic
12	Louise Boyd	Approval	1933	Arctic
13	R Dawson	Approval, loan of instruments	1933	Labrador
14	Freya Stark	Approval, loan of instruments	1935	Hadhramaut, Yemen
15	Kate Ricardo and Janet Owen	Approval, grant of £20	1936	Central and East Africa
16	Freya Stark, Gertrude Caton-Thompson and Elinor Gardner (Wakefield Expedition)	Approval, grant of £200, loan of instruments	1937	Hadhramaut, Yemen
17	Miss Sproule	Approval, loan of instruments	1938	Scotland
18	Miss De Beer	Approval, loan of instruments	1939	China
19	Olive Murray Chapman	Approval, loan of instruments	1939	Madagascar

financial support given, and the Instruments Committee on loans of instruments, the process appears to have been largely an informal one, with an outcome dependent on being connected to or part of the networks of the Society, and on meeting the key criteria implicitly stated by Arthur Hinks, then Secretary of the RGS, in a letter in 1934, in which he described an applicant as a “first rate photographer, a very good traveller who manages an expedition well, and a nice quiet fellow.”<sup>17</sup> These three criteria—expertise, experience, and sociability—were often closely bound up together. Expertise and experience helped to establish oneself credibly as deserving of the status of Fellow, while having such status, supported by adhering to appropriate norms of sociability, helped to open doors to gaining further experience and further honing of expertise.

In the years immediately after 1913, there were very few women-participating expeditions supported by the RGS. In the first eight years of women’s Fellowship, there is evidence of only four applications from expeditions with female participants. These are: Gertrude Bell’s expedition to Hayyil in Arabia in 1913-1914;<sup>18</sup> Wilhelmina Elizabeth Ness’s unsuccessful application for a journey in South America in 1920;<sup>19</sup> and the two Routledge expeditions in which Katherine Routledge<sup>20</sup> was a participant, to Rapanui (Easter Island) in 1913-1916, and to the Pacific in 1920.<sup>21</sup> These early expeditions, although few in number, illustrate the two main patterns of women’s participation in RGS-supported expeditions during this period: of applying directly to the RGS themselves; and of participating in expeditions where someone else had made the application. Between 1913 and 1939 there were nineteen applications directly from women requesting RGS support, as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 2:** Women participating in RGS-supported expeditions without applying directly  
(Continued on next page)

	<b>Name of male applicant, relation to female participants</b>	<b>Name of female participants</b>	<b>Form of support</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Destination</b>
1	William Scoresby Routledge, husband to KR	Katherine Routledge	Approval, loan of instruments	1913	Rapanui (Easter Island)
2	William Scoresby Routledge, husband to KR	Katherine Routledge	Approval, loan of instruments	1920	Pacific
3	Sir Kenneth Mackenzie/Major Douglas (St George Expedition), unrelated	Lucy Evelyn Cheesman, Cynthia Longfield	Approval, loan of instruments, no grant	1924	Pacific
4	Mr Rey, husband to Mrs Rey	Mrs Rey	Approval	1922	Abyssinia, East Africa
5	C A Barns, husband to Mrs Barns	Mrs Barns, Mary Steele	Approval, letter of introduction	1923	Congo, Africa
6	Frederick Mitchell Hedges, unrelated	Mabel Richmond Brown	Advice, rather than approval	1923	Central America
7	Frederick Mitchell Hedges and Dr Gann, unrelated	Mabel Richmond Brown	Approval	1924	Central America
8	Victor Findlay, husband to Mrs Findlay	Mrs Findlay	Approval, grant, and loan of instruments. Expedition cancelled 1926	1925	New Guinea
9	Mr MacCallum, husband to Mrs MacCallum	Mrs MacCallum	No support given (requested assistance with transport arrangements)	1926	Trans-Europe journey

**Table 2 (cont.):** Women participating in RGS-supported expeditions without applying directly

10	Mr Rey, husband to Mrs Rey	Mrs Rey	Approval and large grant of £470. Expedition postponed	1927	Blue Nile, East Africa
11	Stanley Gardiner (Great Barrier Reef Expedition)	Martha Jane 'Mattie' Yonge (husband also in team), Sydonie M Manton, Anne Stephenson (husband also in team)	Approval and large grant of £500	1928	Great Barrier Reef, Australia
12	Louis Leakey, husband of Frida Leakey	Frida Leakey, Mrs Cecely Creasey and Elizabeth Kitson	Approval, grant of £50, loan of instruments	1928	Rift Valley, East Africa
13	Edgar Barton Worthington, husband of Stella Worthington (Cambridge East African Expedition)	Stella Worthington	Approval, grant, and loan of instruments	1930	East Africa
14	German Swiss Kanchenjuna Expedition	Unnamed female climber	Approval	1930	Himalayas
15	J W Gregory, unrelated	Meta McKinnon-Wood	Loan of instruments	1932	Peru
16	J R Baker (Oxford Expedition to New Hebrides), husband of I H Baker and brother of G I Baker	Inezita Hilda Baker, Geraldine (Ina) Baker	Approval, grant of £50, loan of instruments	1933	New Hebrides, Pacific
17	Vivian Fuchs, husband of Joyce Fuchs	Joyce Fuchs	Approval, grant, loan of instruments	1933	Central Africa
18	Laurence Wager, husband of Phyllis Wager (British East Greenland Expedition)	Phyllis Wager, Elizabeth 'Kit' Wager (married to Hal Wager), Mollie Courtauld (married to Augustine Courtauld), Peggy Longland (married to Jack Longland)	Approval, grant, letter of recommendation, loan of instruments	1935	East Greenland
19	Louis Leakey	Mary Nicol (later Leakey)	Approval, loan of instruments	1935	East Africa
20	H. Quaritch Wales, husband of Mrs Quaritch Wales	Mrs Quaritch Wales	Approval?, loan of instruments	1935	Burma
21	Louis Leakey, husband of Mary Leakey	Mary Leakey, Mary Davidson and Molly Paine	Approval, loan of instruments	1937	East Africa
22	H. Quaritch Wales, husband of Mrs Quaritch Wales	Mrs Quaritch Wales	Approval?, loan of instruments	1937	Malaya
23	Vivian Fuchs	Dora MacInnes, wife of other team member	Approval, grant of £100 and loan of instruments	1938	East Africa

For all the applications, it was not necessary for every member of the expeditionary team to have direct contact with the RGS. Generally, applications came from one or two members of the team, and, except perhaps for its 'own' expeditions, the RGS did not need to have direct contact with other members prior to departure, although it might inquire as to their suitability. In this period, the RGS seems to have primarily concerned itself with the credibility of applicants and leaders of expeditions; once satisfied with their expertise and judgement, it could then take their word for the suitability of other team members. As a result, most team members technically accessed the resources that supported their expeditionary work through someone else. Their involvement became dependent on demonstrating their credentials to other members of the team through more informal processes of network participation and accreditation.

During this period there were two main ways for women to participate indirectly in expeditions: alongside a male spouse or relative; or, as a credentialed expert alongside unrelated male colleagues. There was a great deal of overlap between these two categories, in that many of the married women had their own credentials and participated in the scientific work. Of the twenty-three applications from women-participating expeditions between 1913 and 1939 where a woman did not make the application, eighteen included women who were participating alongside their husbands or brothers; that is, seventy-eight percent (see Table 2).

#### *Education and expertise*

Many of the women who participated in RGS-supported expeditionary work during this period had high levels of expertise. One measure of this is their level of educational attainment, and particularly their participation in higher education prior to undertaking expeditionary work. For example, Gertrude Bell read history at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and was the first woman to achieve a first class degree in History from Oxford, completing her studies in two years.<sup>22</sup> Like Bell, most of the other women for whom information on their educational attainment is available attended either Oxford or Cambridge, reflective of their upper-middle and upper class backgrounds, and of their social circles.

Sydonie Manton had been educated at Girton College, Cambridge, and had extremely impressive intellectual credentials, obtaining the highest marks in her Part II (final year) zoology exams, although she was not awarded the appropriate university prize due to gendered restrictions. She went on to become the first woman awarded a doctorate of science by Cambridge in 1934, and to have a distinguished career in zoology.<sup>23</sup> It is important to note that each of these women, distinguished as they were in their intellectual achievement, had gendered restrictions placed on the recognition of that achievement. Both Bell and Manton attended these institutions at a time when women were not awarded their degrees, although they were permitted to study for them.<sup>24</sup>

Interestingly, several of the women participating in RGS-supported expeditions were what would now be classified as mature students, older than the traditional undergraduate student. An example of this form of participation is Gertrude Caton-Thompson, who was recognised during her lifetime as "one of the most outstanding archaeologists of her generation."<sup>25</sup> She began training as an archaeologist in 1921 at the age of thirty-three, including taking classes in Egyptology at University College London with Flinders Petrie and Margaret Murray, and participating in Petrie's excavations at Abydos in Egypt and Murray's excavations in Malta. Caton-Thompson then completed a one-year Research Fellowship at Newnham College, Cambridge, beginning in 1923, where "she enjoyed to the full the social and intellectual life of Cambridge."<sup>26</sup> This included training in surveying with the polar explorer Frank Debenham. Caton-Thompson had such demonstratively high level of subject expertise that she received RGS support for three expeditions.

Lucy Evelyn Cheesman also came late to her studies in entomology, having first wanted to train as a veterinary surgeon.<sup>27</sup> When she was prevented from this choice of career by the gendered restrictions then in operation at the Royal Veterinary College, who did not admit women as students, she worked for a time as a canine nurse, before turning to entomology.<sup>28</sup> She began working with the collections at the Zoological Society of London from 1920, gaining extensive experience and expertise, and attended classes in entomology at Imperial College London.<sup>29</sup> While for Caton-Thompson there does not seem to have been explicit gendered opposition to her chosen career, as there had been for Cheesman, it is possible that implicit gendered expectations for a woman of her upper class social background meant that it had not occurred to her earlier that archaeology could be a possible career.

Not all of the women participating in these expeditions had subject-specific expertise or official qualifications before embarking on their expeditionary work. Some, like Cynthia Longfield and Phyllis Wager, gained expertise and experience during the expeditionary work in question. Catherine M. C. Haines suggests that Longfield joined the St George expedition in 1924 at least partly as a companion for Cheesman, since it would not have been considered appropriate for a lone woman to be part of the team.<sup>30</sup> Longfield was an amateur entomologist with experience of travel, who worked closely with Cyril Collinette on the expedition, beginning a long professional association.<sup>31</sup> Wager had trained as a ballerina before marrying her husband and accompanying



**Figure 1:** Gertrude Bell



**Figure 2:** Gertrude Caton-Thompson

him on his expedition to Greenland. For Wager it was the familial connection that enabled her participation in this work, rather than her own credentials. This gaining of experience and credentials by participating in RGS-supported expeditionary work is also a forerunner to significant changes in RGS policy around support of expeditions in the post-war period, and particularly a shift to undergraduate 'training' expeditions.<sup>32</sup>

### *Experience*

Experience in expeditionary work and travel was also a key criterion for gaining RGS support, particularly in the case of the applicant or proposed leader. By the time of her 1913 expedition, Bell was a very experienced traveller, having undertaken several Middle Eastern expeditions in addition to extensive mountaineering experience in the Alps and at least one round-the-world trip.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, Stark was already making a name for herself as a traveller in the Middle East by the time she first gained RGS support, receiving training in surveying from the RGS instructor Edward Ayearst Reeves in advance of her 1931 expedition to Luristan. Stark was also given a letter of introduction to assist with this expedition, as she wrote to her mother excitedly:

"The Secretary of the R.G.S., Mr. Hinks, is really extraordinarily kind: he has just sent me a note of introduction to the First Secretary of our Legation, saying that I am a serious student who avoids publicity and that they can *safely* [emphasis original] give me any assistance. I feel very pleased with this description. Really everyone now is ready to help—it is just marvellous what my one little Alamut trip last year seems to have done."<sup>35</sup>

Stark was awarded this support on the grounds that she was a 'serious student', who was unlikely to sensationalise her work. Her credentials were established through her prior experience of exploratory travel—her earlier 'Alamut trip'—and the skill that she had demonstrated in undertaking that journey and in communicating her findings.

Similarly, experience, or the lack of it, seems to have been at the heart of the rejection of an early application made by Wilhelmina Elizabeth Ness. In 1920, Ness applied to Hinks for a letter of introduction whilst preparing for an adventurous journey in South America. Hinks refused on the grounds that the Society "makes a rule that it does not give general letters of introduction to a Fellow unless that Fellow is travelling on some mission directly for the Society."<sup>36</sup> Hinks did, however, offer to write to individual Fellows on Ness's behalf to request letters of introduction from them, for example writing to Sir Maurice de Bunsen that Ness was "a very charming lady who is a Fellow of our Society," and that de Bunsen "might have every confidence in" helping her, as "she is, at any rate, particularly nice looking."<sup>37</sup>

Here, Hinks frames Ness in terms of her sociability, and conformity to gendered expectations of behaviour, rather than in terms of her expertise or experience. As a result, it is unsurprising that no help was forthcoming. This framing has clearly gendered overtones in dismissing her abilities, most particularly in that her being "particularly nice looking" is offered as a credential to other Fellows. In the event Ness was able to rely on letters of introduction from her own personal network, demonstrating the importance of such network participation beyond the RGS itself. The contrast with Stark's experiences is quite striking. It is possible that Stark had already proven her credentials by the time of her request, whereas Ness's were more of an unknown quantity at the time of her application. It is also possible that the reasons for

rejecting Ness's application, and supporting Stark's, are linked to changes in policy in the years that separated them. It is unlikely that Fellowship was the deciding criteria, since Ness was a Fellow at the time of her request, whilst Stark did not become one until 1936.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Sociability and network participation*

Although both prior expertise and experience played their part in gaining RGS support, by far the more important criterion was that of appropriate sociability and network participation. Throughout this period, there were a number of networks in and around the Society. These included: the people who helped to organise and run the RGS, and who served on the Council and various committees; the staff employed by the Society, such as clerks, mapmakers, journal editors, and housekeeping staff; elite Fellowship groupings like the Geographical Club;<sup>39</sup> the London-based Fellowship who regularly attended evening meetings; the wider Fellowship who participated in the functions of the Society to lesser or greater degrees; members of other geographical and learned societies who might collaborate with the RGS; and university-based academics connected with the Society through research and refereeing.

These were overlapping networks, with members of one often participating in several of the others. During this period, although women had begun to make inroads into the Fellowship of the RGS and into other learned societies and university departments, several of these networks remained strongly male-dominated. This was particularly true of those networks – around the Council and committees of the RGS, and the closely linked network of the staff employed by the Society – that were central to decision-making, which were closed to women until 1929-1930.<sup>40</sup> During this period, successful applications generally came from the two groups who were able to navigate these male-dominated networks with greater ease. That is, male members of mixed expedition teams, and a handful of elite women who were already well-known to the Society and well-ensconced in its networks. While there were very few such women who successfully directly applied for RGS support during this period, their experiences illustrate the importance of network participation for gaining that support.

Bell's successful participation in the RGS networks was linked to her moneyed upper-middle class background, and the social circles that this enabled her to move in. More speculatively, it is also possible that with her anti-suffrage politics, and her frequent self-positioning as an exceptional woman happiest in the company of men, Bell was not considered to pose a threat to the status quo at the Society, but rather classed as an exception that proved the rule.<sup>41</sup> We do know that women with more radical politics were explicitly seen as a threat during the years that Bell was closely linked with the Society, to the extent that in 1914 women who were not Fellows, guests of Fellows, or known students were excluded from the Society's premises for fear of militant suffragette activity.<sup>42</sup> It is likely that Bell did little to disrupt the previously homosocial spaces to which she was now admitted. These two particular elements which helped her gain RGS support – class background, and personal politics and positioning – are key components of fellowship and sociability. As such, they are useful for understanding how and why other women making direct applications to the RGS in this early period did and did not receive support.

Like Bell, Caton-Thompson came from a privileged upper middle class background. Alongside her impressive intellectual credentials, extensive experience of travel, and archaeological excavation, Caton-Thompson also had close connections with the RGS, not least because from 1910 she kept an apartment in Albert Hall Mansions as her London base, practically next door to the Society's headquarters at Lowther Lodge, South Kensington.<sup>43</sup> She was awarded the Cuthbert Peek Grant by the RGS in 1932, one amongst a slew of medals and awards that she received from a number of learned societies and other institutions.<sup>44</sup> She was also one of the first women to serve on the Society's Council and Committees in the 1930s. However, in terms of personal politics

and positioning Caton-Thompson was very different to Bell, being a self-described feminist with strong commitments to the emancipation of women. She first became involved with the female suffrage movement in the early 1910s, as part of a lifelong commitment to feminist politics and practice which saw her choosing consciously to work with other women and to support their careers, such as Mary Leakey, who also participated in RGS-supported expeditions in this period.<sup>45</sup>

Stark did not share the wealthy, upper-class background of Bell and Caton-Thompson, and throughout her life was reliant on her pen to fund herself and her journeys; she was also often self-conscious about her background.<sup>46</sup> What does seem clear is that during the early 1930s the RGS adopted Stark as “one of their own.”<sup>47</sup> This is possibly linked to Stark’s anti-feminist politics and positioning; like Bell, Stark also liked to be an exceptional woman in the company of men.<sup>48</sup> During this period, Stark published a number of articles in the *Geographical Journal* on her Persian and Mesopotamian adventures, and was awarded the Back Grant “for her journeys in Luristan” in 1933.<sup>49</sup> She also socialised with others who moved in the Society’s networks, including Ness, whom Stark met in November, 1933 and who persuaded Stark to lecture to the Forum Club a month later.<sup>50</sup> Such sociability was a key part of participating in RGS networks.

Of the different criteria, therefore – expertise, experience, and fellowship – it seems to have been fellowship, in the sense of existing strong connections to the RGS and participation in its networks, that was most important for this group of women in terms of gaining support, although they all also had impressive educational credentials and experience, and although the particular forms which that sociability took could vary. It was these credentials that no doubt helped to establish their membership of these networks in the first place. While these connections were often eventually expressed in the form of actual Fellowship of the Society, having the status of Fellow does not seem to have been a necessary condition for these women to gain support for their work.

Women also made use of networks peripheral to the RGS in order to facilitate their expeditionary work, as can be illustrated by looking at examples of women who participated in RGS-supported expeditionary work without directly applying for support themselves. This included qualified women like Manton and Cheesman participating alongside unrelated men, on the basis of their own intellectual credentials and their professional network participation, as well as another key route to participation in RGS-supported expeditionary work.

This was participation through familial-social networks, which accounts for the majority of women who participated in RGS-supported expeditionary work without applying directly themselves between 1913 and 1939: seventy-eight percent of these women were participating alongside a male spouse or relative. For women, familial network participation represented an important means of participating in RGS-supported expeditionary work during this period, in a clear continuity with the pre-Fellowship period. It was a particularly important route given the formal and informal barriers that remained to women obtaining their own formal credentials. This included formal barriers to education, such as those experienced by Cheesman, and formal barriers to participation, such as those preventing women from working in certain areas, for instance the case of Joyce Fuchs (who was forbidden from certain areas closed to European women when working alongside her husband on his Lake Rudolph expedition).<sup>51</sup> Barriers also included informal bars to higher education, such as those experienced by Stella Worthington, whose father had at first refused to support her studies at Cambridge; it was only through the intercession of the headmistress of the girls’ school where Worthington was teaching that she was given permission to attend Cambridge.<sup>52</sup>

There is one set of familial-social networks, in and around the University of Cambridge, that seem to have been particularly important for increasing women’s participation in RGS-

supported expeditionary work in this period. Members of this informal network were involved in a series of expeditions on the African Great Lakes that shared personnel, and which seem to have been supported by professional and social networks in Cambridge. For example, Kate Ricardo worked as research assistant to Edgar Barton Worthington on the collections brought back on from his 1930 expedition, gaining expertise and accreditation for her own expedition in 1935.<sup>53</sup> The close social connections in this network are suggested by the fact that two of the families concerned, the Leakeys (Frida and Louis) and the Worthingtons, shared tenancy of a converted oast-house in Foxton, near Cambridge, in the early 1930s.<sup>54</sup> Another example involving Edgar Barton Worthington is that he encouraged his sister Phyllis Wager to take part in her husband's 1935-36 East Greenland expedition.<sup>55</sup>

What emerges clearly from this Cambridge-affiliated familial-social network is the importance of women's participation becoming normalised and therefore appropriate, and the development of social norms rendering it acceptable to "take women on expedition." The existence of the network at first seems ironic given that Cambridge did not award full degrees to its female students until 1948. However, it could be seen as reflecting the way that Cambridge provided unofficial opportunities to women (in letting them attend classes and sit examinations) while not formally recognizing their achievement. These familial-social networks, and the way that they supported the participation of women alongside their male relatives, may have also opened up opportunities for other unmarried women. It is possible that the married status of her two female colleagues legitimated the participation of Manton, a young unmarried woman, on the Cambridge Great Barrier Reef expedition. Similarly, the presence of Frida Leakey and Cecely Creasey on the first Leakey East African expedition in 1928 may have made possible the presence of Elizabeth Kitson, just as the presence of Mary Leakey on the 1937 Leakey East African expedition may have legitimated the presence of Mary Davidson and Molly Paine. It is also important to note the class dimensions surrounding participation in these Cambridge-affiliated networks. In the cases of many of these women, their educational attainment is probably linked to their upper and upper-middle class backgrounds, particularly those whose education was primarily at Oxford and Cambridge. Their attendance at these elite universities made them part of the official and unofficial networks that coalesced around these institutions, allowing them to make contacts with mentors and future colleagues, and in the case of some of these women, their future husbands.

## Conclusion

Considered as a cohort, the experiences of these women illustrate that between 1913 and 1939 there were a number of different routes to participation in RGS-supported expeditions for women. Some of these routes also existed for their male peers and colleagues, in a potential avenue for future research. Both for women applying directly to the RGS for support, and for women participating in expeditions without applying themselves, their expeditionary participation was dependent on their demonstrating personal credentials, and on their membership of key networks, although the particular credentials and the networks in question varied considerably.

Unsurprisingly, close affiliation with the RGS and participation in its networks were central to receiving its support for those women making a direct application, with their participation founded on appropriate sociability and fellowship in terms of a shifting combination of class background and personal politics, as well as their impressive credentials. For those women participating without directly applying themselves, it was participation in other networks that was most important, with membership of familial-social networks being particularly crucial for many. For both groups, university networks played an important part in their accessing expeditionary space. What is particularly interesting is the way that most of these women were

involved in a number of these different networks, so that we have a system of overlapping and interlinked networks within and beyond the RGS. Given the hegemonic position of the RGS during this period, it is also likely that the symbolic importance of RGS support and patronage also helped some of the women to navigate these other networks.

Feminist interventions in the history of geography, of which this paper is an example, have now contributed extensive empirical evidence of women's past geographical work and involvement with geographical institutions, of the kind sought by Domosh in her pioneering call to arms a quarter century ago. Remediating such omissions is an end in itself. In broadening the cast of players within histories of geography to include figures like the women discussed in this paper, we can also further reveal the diversity of past practice, as well as showing that "women are not new arrivals" within these histories.<sup>56</sup>

As also anticipated by early feminist historical geography, and demonstrated extensively by subsequent feminist interventions, including this paper, making space for these women and their experiences within the history of geographical thought and practice, and of expeditionary work in particular, also raises further issues; famously, one cannot simply add women and stir. These include questions of importance and marginality, in the context of a move within histories of geography, both as part of and beyond explicitly feminist approaches, to consider "smaller stories" – and to move beyond famous or dramatic incidents to more "everyday" experiences.<sup>57</sup> While some of the women discussed here, such as Bell and Stark, were and remain well-known figures, others can be read as marginal both at the time and within histories of geography. However, they too were nonetheless often closely involved in some of the central networks of the RGS, and frequently occupied a privileged position from both class and racial perspectives. Their presence adds further nuance and complexity to understandings of both the RGS, and of expeditionary work, during this period, not least because of the sheer diversity of that work in terms of subject matter, methodologies, personnel and location, as hinted at throughout this paper. That diversity also opens up significant new avenues for further research, for which it is hoped this paper may provide an initial sketch map.

## NOTES

1. Mona Domosh, "Towards a feminist historiography of geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16 (1991a): 95-104; Mona Domosh, "Beyond the frontiers of geographical knowledge," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16 (1991b): 488-90.
2. David R. Stoddart, "Ideas and Interpretations in the History of Geography" in David R. Stoddart, ed., *Geography, Ideology and Social Concern* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 1-7; David R. Stoddart, *On Geography and its History* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1986).
3. E.g. Stoddart, *On Geography*; David N. Livingstone, *The geographical tradition: episodes in the history of a contested enterprise* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); see Audrey Kobayashi, "Review," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85 (1995): 192-194.
4. E.g. Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994); Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, G., eds. *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (New York, Guilford, 1994); Cheryl McEwan, "Gender, science and physical geography in nineteenth-century Britain" *Area*. 30 (1998): 215-223; Cheryl McEwan, *Gender, Geography and Empire: Victorian Women Travellers in West Africa* (Aldershot: Algate, 2000); Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991); Karen M. Morin, "Peak Practices: Englishwomen's 'Heroic' Adventures in the Nineteenth-Century American West," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 89 (1999): 489-514; Karen M. Morin, *Frontiers of Femininity: A New Historical Geography of the Nineteenth-Century American West* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

5. Shirley Foster and Sara Mills, *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).
6. Janice Monk, "The Women Were Always Welcome at Clark," *Economic Geography* 74 (1998): 14-30; Janice Monk, "Women, gender and the histories of American geography" *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 94 (2004): 1-22.
7. Janice Monk, "Women's worlds at the American Geographical Society," *The Geographical Review*. 93 (2003): 237-57; Janice Monk, "Changing expectations and institutions: American women geographers in the 1970s," *The Geographical Review*. 96 (2006): 259-277.
8. Morag Bell and Cheryl McEwan, "The admission of women fellows to the Royal Geographical Society, 1892-1914: the controversy and the outcome," *The Geographical Journal* 162 (1996): 295-312; Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism*; Domosh, "Towards a feminist historiography of geography"; Sarah Evans, Innes M. Keighren and Avril Maddrell, "Coming of age? Reflections on the centenary of women's admission to the Royal Geographical Society," *The Geographical Journal*. 179 (2013): 373-376; Avril Maddrell, "Complex locations: historiography, feminism and difference", in J. Sharp and D. Thien, eds., *Gender and Geography Reconsidered* (London: RGS-IBG Women and Geography Study Group, 2004); Avril Maddrell, *Complex Locations: Women's Geographical Work in the UK 1850-1970* (Oxford: RGS-IBG Book Series/Blackwell, 2009).
9. Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
10. That is, fellowship in terms of appropriate sociability, and literal Fellowship of the RGS.
11. Bell and McEwan, "The admission of women fellows"; Evans, Keighren and Maddrell, "Coming of age?"; Maddrell, *Complex locations*.
12. Bell and McEwan, "The admission of women fellows"; Evans, Keighren and Maddrell, "Coming of age?"
13. Bell and McEwan, "The admission of women fellows"; Evans, Keighren and Maddrell, "Coming of age?"; Avril Maddrell, "Teaching a Contextual and Feminist History of Geography through Role Play: Women's Membership of the Royal Geographical Society (1892-1893)" *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 31 (2007): 393-412; Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
14. Evans, Keighren and Maddrell, "Coming of age?"
15. Sarah Evans, *Terra incognita: Women on Royal Geographical Society-supported expeditions 1913-1970*. PhD, University of the West of England. Retrieved from: <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/25582>
16. Throughout this period there were regular reorganisations of the Committees that covered research and expeditions. At times there were two separate 'Research' and 'Expeditions' committees, and at others a single 'Research and Expeditions Committee'.
17. Arthur Hinks to Gertrude Caton-Thompson, December 3rd, 1934, Correspondence Block 9 Gertrude Caton-Thompson 1925-1940, RGS-IBG Archives.
18. R. O'Brien, *Gertrude Bell: The Arabian Diaries 1913-1914* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000); Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
19. Wilhelmina Elizabeth Ness, better known in the sources by her married name of Mrs Patrick Ness, was the first woman to sit on the Council of the RGS, from 1930. Ness, an independently wealthy widow, donated significant sums to the RGS to support expeditionary work.
20. In the case of women who had changed their name over the course of their life, such as by taking a husband's name at marriage, I will throughout this paper use the name by which they were known at the time of the expeditionary work in question.

21. Katherine Routledge, "Easter Island," *The Geographical Journal* 49 (1917): 321-340; Katherine Routledge, *The Mystery of Easter Island* (New York: Cosimo, 1919 [2005]); Joanne van Tilburg, *Among Stone Giants: The Life of Katherine Routledge and her Remarkable Expedition to Easter Island* (New York and London: Scribner, 2003).
22. Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Liora Lukitz, *A Quest in the Middle East: Gertrude Bell and the Making of Modern Iraq* (New York: Tauris, 2006); Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
23. M. Ogilvie and J. Harvey, *The Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science: Pioneering Lives from Ancient Times to the Mid-20th Century* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000) Volume 1 A-K.
24. See Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
25. M. S. Drower, "Gertrude Caton-Thompson 1888-1985", in G. M. Cohen and M. Sharp Joukowsky, eds., *Breaking Ground: Pioneering Women Archaeologists* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 351.
26. Drower, "Gertrude Caton-Thompson 1888-1985", 356.
27. E. J. Morse, "Cheesman, (Lucy) Evelyn (1881-1969)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004 [online]). Retrieved from: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/57174> [Accessed 1 Nov 2016].
28. Lucy Evelyn Cheesman, *Things Worth While*. (London: Hutchinson, 1957); Ogilvie and Harvey, *Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science*.
29. Ogilvie and Harvey, *Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science*.
30. C. M. C. Haines, *International Women in Science: A Biographical Dictionary to 1950* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001).
31. A. J. A. Douglas and P. H. Johnson, *The South Seas of To-day. Being an account of the Cruise of the Yacht St. George to the South Pacific*. (London, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1926); Haines, *International Women in Science*.
32. Evans, *Terra incognita*.
33. Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad*; Lukitz, *Quest in the Middle East*; Maddrell, *Complex locations*.
34. Freya Stark, *The Valleys of the Assassins* (New York: The Modern Library, 1934 [2001]); Freya Stark, *Letters: Volume Two The Open Door 1930-35*, ed. Lucy Moorehead (Wiltshire: Compton Russell, 1975); J. F. Geniesse, *Freya Stark: Passionate Nomad*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999).
35. Freya Stark to Flora Stark, 18 July 1931, printed in Stark, *Letters*, 21.
36. Arthur Hinks to Wilhelmina Elizabeth [Mrs Patrick] Ness, 22 November 1920, Correspondence Block 9 Mrs Patrick Ness 1921-1930, RGS-IBG Archives.
37. Arthur Hinks to Sir Maurice de Bunsen, 23 November 1920, Correspondence Block 9 Mrs Patrick Ness 1921-1930, RGS-IBG Archives.
38. Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
39. See Hugh R. Mill, *The Record of the Royal Geographical Society, 1830-1930* (London: Royal Geographical Society, 1930).
40. Evans, Keighren and Maddrell, "Coming of age?"; Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
41. See Lukitz, *Quest in the Middle East*; Maddrell, *Complex Locations*; O'Brien, Gertrude Bell.
42. Minutes of Council, 23 March 1914, Council Minutesbooks, vol. 9, p. 76, RGS-IBG Archives.
43. Drower, "Gertrude Caton-Thompson 1888-1985."
44. Meeting of Council 11 April 1932, Council Minutebooks, vol. 13 p. 244, RGS-IBG Archives; Drower, "Gertrude Caton-Thompson 1888-1985."
45. see Gertrude Caton-Thompson, *Mixed Memoirs* (Gateshead and Tyne & Wear: Paradigm Press, 1983); Drower, "Gertrude Caton-Thompson 1888-1985."

46. Geniesse, *Freya Stark*; Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
47. Freya Stark, *The Coast of Incense: Autobiography 1933-1939* (London: John Murray, 1953); Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
48. See Maddrell, *Complex Locations*, and particularly the discussion of the Wakefield Expedition in 1937.
49. Minutes of Council 3 April 1933, Council Minutebooks, vol. 14 p. 60, RGS-IBG Archives.
50. Freya Stark to Flora Stark, 26 November 1933, printed in Stark, *Letters*, p. 162; Freya Stark to Flora Stark, 12 December 1933, printed in Stark, *Letters*, p. 164. The Forum Club was a leading women's club, and Ness was head of its Geographical Section. See Wilhelmina Elizabeth [Mrs Patrick] Ness to Sir Charles Close, May 8 1929, Correspondence Block 9 Mrs Patrick Ness 1921-1930, RGS-IBG Archives.
51. 'Obituary: Sir Vivian Fuchs', *The Times* 13 November 1999. Retrieved from: <http://www.spri.cam.ac.uk/people/fuchs/> [Accessed 21 Oct 2016]. See also Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire 1895-1945*. (Cambridge Massachusetts and London England: Harvard University Press, 2001); P. Clarkson, "P. Fuchs, Sir Vivian Ernest (1908-1999)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/73181> [Accessed 1 Nov 2016]; P. Cox, R.C. Wakefield, D. G. MacInnes, A. M. Champion, E. B. Worthington and V. E. Fuchs, "The Lake Rudolf Rift Valley Expedition, 1934: Discussion," *The Geographical Journal* 86 (1935): 137-142; Edgar Barton Worthington, *The Ecological Century: A Personal Appraisal* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1983).
52. Worthington, *The Ecological Century*.
53. Cicely Kate Bertram and Janet Trant, *Letters from the Swamps: East Africa 1936-1937*. (Edited by Ion Trant. Self-published, 1991); Worthington, *The ecological century*.
54. Worthington, *The Ecological Century*.
55. Jane Hargreaves, L. R. Wager. *A Life 1904-1965*. (Oxford: Self-published, printed by Joshua Associates Ltd, 1991); Jane Hargreaves, 'Phyllis Wager obituary'. *The Guardian* 3 August 2011 [online]. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2011/aug/03/phyllis-wager-obituary> [Accessed 1 Nov 2016].
56. Maddrell, *Complex Locations*.
57. See Hayden Lorimer, "Talking small stories: spaces of knowledge and the practice of geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28 (2003): 197-217; Hayden Lorimer and Nick Spedding, "Excavating geography's hidden spaces," *Area* 34 (2002): 294-302; Hayden Lorimer and Nick Spedding, "Locating field science: a geographical family expedition to Glen Roy, Scotland," *British Journal for the History of Science* 38 (2005): 13-33.