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Annual Conference 2002

Welcome from the chair of conference

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**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

The School of Geography and Queen's University Belfast welcomes all delegates and guests to the Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) Annual Conference.

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A Department of Geography at Queen's University Belfast was founded in 1928 under Estyn Evans. Evans, a student of H.J. Fleure, had a hard task to build up the nascent department but, by the time of his retirement in 1968, was able to hand over a flourishing unit. Prof. William Kirk became the next Head of Department, and was able to build up the department still further during the expansion of the 1970s when staff numbers increased to 21. In 1988, the department was combined first with the Department of Archaeology and Palaeoecology and subsequently with the Department of Geology to create the school of Geosciences, which was led first by Prof. Paul Compton, later by Prof. Brian Whalley. In 1998 Archaeology and Palaeoecology became a separate School and with the demise of Geology at Queen's, Geography became a School in its own right in August 2000 now led by Prof. Julia Orford. The University's confidence in the School has been shown by the creation of six new posts so that over the last three years the staff has grown to 20 full-time academics supported by 13 clerical, administrative and technical staff. With recent expansion in staff, traditional research strengths are being consolidated and new areas of interest and expertise are being developed. Research is organised and prompted through five main research groupings: (i) Knowledge, Space and Culture, (ii) Historical Geography of Landscape, Place and Identity, (iii) Society, Space and Political Economy, (iv) Environmental Change, and (v) Weathering Studies.

The 2002 Conference has four themes: *Landscape; Divided Cities, divided communities; Complexity and chaos; and Migration* and most of the papers assembled by the Convenors, working on behalf of Research Groups, reflect these broad themes. The programme is extensive with 10 to 15 parallel sessions on most days, plenary and guest lectures and a number of receptions. This year, to meet requests from delegates and some research groups, there are more sessions on the last two days – moving a little further from New Year – and we have also limited the number of sessions running parallel with the Chair of Conference session ('Maps – Geography – Society' on Thursday afternoon). In a conference this complex, there will be some late changes to the programme; alterations and updates will be posted daily at Reception in the Peter Froggatt Centre.

As Local Secretary, I have been in contact with many delegates, particularly by email, and I look forward to meeting some of you during the conference – in particular, Research Group Secretaries and Chairs and Convenors of the sessions who have produced programme and abstracts to what may have seemed very early deadlines. The role of the Local Secretary would be impossible without the support of these people and that of the RGS-IBG Research and Higher Education Division; Lorraine Craig and the team have provided the continuity with past conferences and the essential links to Geography Departments, Publishers, etc. Academic, technical and secretarial staff and postgraduates of the School of Geography have also played a major role in the conference organisation – handling all the general arrangements, bookings and registrations, lecture rooms, conference handbook and many other tasks. We hope that you have an enjoyable conference – thank you for coming and giving your support to the conference.

*Roy Tomlinson
Local Secretary, RGS-IBG Annual Conference
Belfast 2002*