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#### POSTGRADUATE MEMBERS

Judith Gerber, a postgraduate student at the School of Geography, University of Oxford, is compiling a list of names and addresses of all HPGRG postgraduate members. If you, either, are a postgraduate member, or would like to become one or even if you want to know more about postgraduate involvement, contact Judith at the School of Geography, University of Oxford, Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TB.



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY  
(with The Institute of British Geographers)



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#### HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF GEOGRAPHY RESEARCH GROUP

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### NEWSLETTER MAY 1996

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#### CONFERENCE REPORTS

##### The Annual Conference of the RGS-IBG, Strathclyde, January 1996

The Group organised three sessions at this conference: Geographies of Knowledge; New Horizons in the History and Philosophy of Geography: Scottish Discussions; Environmental Philosophies.

##### Session 1: Geographies of Knowledge

The recent surge of interest in the significance of spatiality for understanding intellectual history in general, and the history of science in particular, was fully reflected in a session on 'geographies of knowledge'. In the first module, **Steven Shapin** (University of California, San Diego), a Study Group and RGS-IBG Vice-Presidential Guest, spoke on 'Placing the view from nowhere: historical and sociological problems in the location of science'. Shapin began with a review of the localist turn in the history and sociology of scientific knowledge, arguing that, indeed, there is now sufficient theoretical and empirical work to substantiate the view that in the making of science local factors turn out to be of considerable importance. The issue confronting practitioners of science studies now, he urged, was to address two questions: how science - whatever its local mainsprings - travels with such remarkable efficiency, and the ways in which local circumstances are implicated in the production of *meaning*. Answering the first question, he argued, required detailed examination of the issue of epistemic trust since it was essentially concerned with bringing the distant near. As for the issue of meaning, Shapin used the very local circumstances of Robert Boyle's residence and neighbours to make sense of his moral tracts. In the second paper, **Nigel Thrift** (University of Bristol) presented his analysis of 'Knowledge economies: the rise of soft capitalism'. Here Thrift turned attention to the world of business and management and urged that in this arena there is a widespread awareness of multiple rationalities, of the significance of tacit knowledge, and the importance of knowledge spaces - in other words, that the very issues currently exercising students of the sociology of scientific knowledge are already making their way through modern business. In Thrift's view, the awakening of management literature to - and the espousal of - these new discourses of knowledge are leading to what he calls a 'soft capitalism'.

The second module was devoted to three more specific studies. Developing Shapin's argument about the role of space in the constitution of scientific knowledge, **David Livingstone** (Queen's University, Belfast) considered the contrasting reception of Darwinism in Edinburgh and Belfast, two important sites of theological and scientific debate during the nineteenth century. He contrasted the relative lack of anxiety over Darwin amongst Edinburgh's calvinist theologians with the stormy controversy which followed John Tyndall's address to the British Association meeting in Belfast in 1874. Drawing attention to the differing circumstances of scientific practice in these two cities, he