Our Leadership Team

Hartz 2021

Exceptional Expedition Leaders have always been critical to the British Exploring Society and are a fundamental part of what makes us a unique charity. We value them very highly. Throughout our history, our leaders have offered their time freely and have shared their professionalism and commitment for the benefit of Explorers in destinations all over the world.

Our leaders come from a variety of professional backgrounds and bring with them a wealth of experience and skills. As we are sure you will discover, they are outstanding individuals, and form a remarkable team.

Paul Batterbury
Chief Leader

Paul has been a teacher for over 30 years, a significant period in pastoral care before moving into senior leadership, including headships in Nepal, Saudi Arabia and Lincoln.

Three months in Belize with Operation Raleigh launched his expedition career following which he led over a dozen expeditions for World Challenge. When not leading, Paul embarks on his own adventures exploring mountains throughout the globe as well as Europe and Britain.

Currently Paul enjoys a less pressured but no less exciting role as head of biology in a large east midlands school. Paul has been a keen competitive swimmer and triathlete as well as ultra-marathon runner. Now spending more time reading than training, Paul believes that expeditions provide the perfect learning environment, where application of knowledge and transferable skills can be refined and honed for lifelong learning.

Taff Raymond
Deputy Chief Leader

Taff’s real name is Geraint but he got pinned with Taff on joining the British Military way back in 1999. Since then, life has been pretty varied with extensive travelling across the globe both personally and professionally, a fair amount of this being with BES on expeditions throughout the decades.

Taff is a qualified personal trainer and sports therapist so there’s no excuses for fitness or injuries reducing your performance whilst away on adventures. On the jobs front, Taff has had many, within lots of different areas, some of the more memorable being: cycle courier /rickshaw rider, landscaper, (only big eccentric houses have these) sheep shearer (well, the presser but who knows what that is!), milkman (ish), and most recently working with the British Antarctic Survey where he met some people who were once YE’s on BES expeditions.

During Taff’s outdoor professional work he’s worked with characters from lots of different backgrounds including both people spending their first night under canvas and those with lots of experience of the outdoors. Taff likes to think he might have had a positive effect on them somehow.
Ali Weaver
Basecamp Manager

Living in Sheffield Alistair likes to spend all his free time exploring the Peak District. His favourite pastimes are hiking and camping and last year he hiked the UK Coast to Coast footpath.

In 2019 he supported a trail building expedition in the Caucasus Mountains in Georgia and was previously a walk leader in the Italian Dolomites. When not outdoors he works as a Project Manager for Network Rail helping make the trains run on time.

Jennie Richardson
Adventure Leader

Jennie who studied BSc Environmental Science and Geography and MA Countryside Management worked as a Rights of Way and Access Development Officer for many years before retraining as a geography teacher. Preferring the outdoor classroom Jennie worked for the Field Studies Council across the UK before going freelance.

Living in North Wales, Jennie mixes the world of overseas expeditions and personal development with environmental education teaching geography and biology fieldwork skills, she works as a UK mountain leader and can also be found exploring the watery environment in a canoe or sea kayak.

Jennie has been leading with BES for a number or years on expeditions to Artic Finmark, Himalaya, Yukon and Scotland taking on a variety of roles including adventure leader, trainee leader mentor, deputy chief leader and chief leader. In recent years Jennie has also explored a variety of other locations as part of a youth expedition or personal travel including Morocco, Iceland, Tanzania, Svalbard, Norway, and Greenland.

Ken Michie
Adventure Leader

Ken has spent time living and working in Asia Johannesburg and London. Ken ended up as a Managing Director in the largest shipping services provider in the world. During all this he married and has brought up three children.

Ken took on other challenges; including various expeditions in the Himalaya, the Andes and Skiing as part of a small expedition to the North Pole. He has a keen interest in endurance events including Ironman Ultramarathon, he has also just been accepted as a crew member of the 2023/24 Cipper round the world yacht race.

Ken and his wife have been involved in Charity work focusing on helping others, building schools and houses in rural communities of South East Asia. Ken qualified as a Mountain Leader in 2018 so that he can combine his passion for the outdoors whilst helping others achieve.
Patrick Rutledge
Adventure Leader

Patrick works in South Wales for an NGO designing and delivering education, sustainability, and outdoor learning projects within Wales and internationally, focusing on North America, South America, Europe and East Africa. He is a qualified Mountain Leader and secondary school teacher with a subject of Outdoor Activities. In addition to this, he is currently studying for a part-time Masters in Outdoor Education alongside his work.

Patrick has worked as an outdoor learning practitioner and expedition leader both within the UK and internationally for several years. He is particularly excited as a first-time leader to help connect explorers with nature after the isolation of lockdowns.

Patrick enjoys climbing, hiking, skiing, fast-packing, surfing, and stand-up paddleboarding in his spare time. He has taken to cooking outside in the evenings over a fire with his Dutch oven, although his bread-making skills require further training.

Hannah McKnight
Adventure Leader

Hannah currently works as a Physics teacher at Friends’ School Lisburn, Northern Ireland. She is involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and enjoys supervising and assessing expeditions.

She is also member of North West Mountain Rescue Team where she enjoys volunteering her time to help others and learn new skills. In her spare time, she volunteers with the Scout Association and is an Explorer Scout leader.

Hannah has been an Adventure Leader on 2 previous BES expeditions to Canadian Yukon and the Indian Himalayas. Other travel experience includes expeditions in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, French and Italian Alps, Iceland and UK. She has also enjoyed cultural explorations of India, Peru and Japan.

Gaby Wood
Adventure Leader

Gaby Wood is a passionate advocate for supporting young people, in all their diversity, to realise their potential through the transformative experiences which are found in unique, challenging and remote environments. Gaby particularly enjoys working to remove barriers to participation, promoting how we can tread more lightly in our precious natural environments and supporting inter-cultural learning.

A youth worker, outdoor professional and International Development practitioner she has led programmes and expeditions across 30+ countries, working with global young people to develop personally and affect positive change. She can’t wait to share her experience and love of our wild places with the team and to support the development of the next generation of adventure and environmental advocates!
Mike Burnham  
Senior Social Leader

Mike lives in Preston but grew up in High Wycombe. He studied forensic science before retraining to be a primary school teacher 5 years ago.

Since an early age he has camped and explored different parts of the U.K. He is drawn back to the Scottish Islands each year especially the Isle of Skye. He has a thirst for outdoor activities from Canoeing to mountaineering and fell running.

He loves challenging himself; from undertaking self-sufficient cycling tours to running ultras and long-distance walking paths. When he’s not physically active he can be found sat by a body of water throwing stones and enjoying the tranquil scene or enjoying watching the flames of a campfire. Mike is looking forward to sharing his passion for the outdoors with his team this summer.

Leah Farquharson  
Knowledge Leader

Leah’s love for adventure and wild places was nurtured in childhood, spending her summers roaming the great glens, mountains and lochs of the Scottish Highlands.

She is now a practising Ecological and Conservation Scientist with a BSc in Ecological Science and Conservation from the University of Edinburgh and an MSc in Environmental Management (Conservation) from The University of Stirling. Her work and studies have taken her all over the world from Central and South America to Western Africa. Leah has a deep love for tropical Rainforests, specifically Amazonia and she is currently developing a research and community development programme in Peru.

Leah believes that the climate and biodiversity crisis relies on rewilding the land and ourselves. This involves nurturing an inner awareness of the natural world around us, physically connecting to the landscape and restoring underlying ecological processes through practical conservation work.

She believes education is key in this movement and was inspired to join British Exploring Society for this reason.

Louise Kelly  
Knowledge Leader

Louise’s love of adventure started with the Venture Scouts, Ranger Guides and doing D of E awards. She then completed a BSc in Geology but somehow ended up in Market Research!

After 18 years working in the corporate world, Louise left it all behind to get back to her first love – exploring the planet. In 2019 she spent a year in South and Central America visiting 11 countries, walking the Inca Trail and volunteering with a marine conservation project to protect the coral reefs in Mexico.

She was also part of the team leading a 3 month-long expedition for young volunteers in Costa Rica. This involved trekking for 250km as well as completing two natural resource management projects in national parks.

She’s looking forward to her first expedition with BES and sharing the experience of the Scottish Highlands with the young explorers.
Ali first learned about BES through her daughter who went to Svalbard as a YE and then to Arctic Finnmark as a TL. Ali then was inspired to follow in her footsteps and joined the Arctic Finnmark 2013 BES expedition as Science Leader. Having graduated (many years ago!) from Loughborough University in Geography and PE/Sports Science she progressed to a Masters from Reading University before training as a teacher at Bristol University.

Through her interests and her work as a secondary school teacher Ali is keen on the BES aims of personal development through science and adventure, and has a particular interest in sustainability issues having developed a Learning for Sustainability course for her pupils. This is well supported with her courses for the John Muir Award and with the Duke of Edinburgh award. In her spare time she loves spending time outdoors hiking in the mountains, mountain biking in the woods or paddle boarding. Ali’s personal drive has supported her to international sporting experiences in the past and she enjoys supporting young people to push out of their comfort zones and enjoy the resulting sense of achievement and confidence building.

Riana is a born adventurer with a passion for the outdoors. It all started when she was 18, when she herself was a Young Explorer on a British Exploring Society expedition to the Peruvian Amazon in August 2009. This expedition inspired a love for the outdoors and everything in our natural world. She then went on to work in several countries across the globe, while spending 5 summers employed as a youth director at the Boys & Girls Club Outdoor Education Programme in America. As a keen environmentalist, Riana has seen the value of connecting people with nature.

Having travelled extensively, Riana has developed a fascination for Geography, and last year embarked upon her professional career, completing her PGCE in Geography. She keeps busy in her spare time: hiking, rock climbing and looking after her 20-year-old cat Tigger.

Meredith graduated in MA (Hons) Geography from the University of Edinburgh, where she specialised in Australian eucalypt forests and also completed research into Iceland’s biodiversity.

As a great believer in the power of people to make a big difference, Meredith runs a non-profit organisation which aims to get people outside and exploring the landscape around them, as well as making behaviour changes that benefit the environment.

Meredith grew up in the Scottish countryside which created a lifelong love for climbing mountains - where she can normally be found at the weekends - and has also lived in Australia, Ireland & the United States. Her previous expeditions have taken her all over the world from the desert in Oman to the mangroves of Malaysia and she’s happiest when exploring new environments.

Meredith is a Trustee of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.
Matt studied Geography and Politics at the University of Edinburgh specialising in climate change, environmental politics and landscape change. Following his degree he travelled the world as a skii instructor. He has worked in Japan, Switzerland, Austria, Italy and Scotland since 2013 and continues to teach skiing whenever he can. From 2018 - 2021 Matt worked in Environmental education for the youth work organisation, Earth Calling in Edinburgh. Throughout this work he has taught young people about native wildlife, nature, bushcraft skills, and geography. Matt now works for the Scottish Youth Parliament as the Communications Officer working with young people on a range of different issues.

In his free time, Matt is a keen skier and hill walker and can be found roaming around Scotland’s hills and mountains. Matt gained his first experience of expeditions at University in the North of Scotland and Iceland and continues to look for interesting ways to explore new places.

David graduated from University of Nottingham Medical School in 2016. During his studies he worked alongside several charities in Kenya and India. From Nottingham he moved to Cornwall, where he completed a PGCE Clinical Education and spent time teaching in Wollega University, Ethiopia. Nowadays David is based in South Wales having worked as a Clinical fellow in Emergency Medicine and now as a General Practitioner.

David has always had a passion for adventure. He enjoys kayaking and mountaineering, you will find him either up a mountain or around the coast exploring Wales whatever the weather. Linking his two passions David also volunteers as a team doctor for Western Beacons Mountain Rescue. As much as David enjoys personal challenges, he finds the reward of working as a team whilst on adventures just cannot be matched.