

Professor David Vaughan
Leader, Ice Sheets Programme, British Antarctic Survey

David Vaughan signed up for two summers in Antarctica, and is surprised to find himself still at BAS almost 30 years later. He is now a leading expert on how ice sheets melt, flow and contribute to sea level rise.



I joined NERC's British Antarctic Survey in 1985, after completing a Masters degree in Geophysics. I joined as a contract glaciologist with the expectation that I'd complete two summer seasons in Antarctica, write up the results, and then leave at the end of my three-year contract. Much to my surprise I'm still working at BAS in 2013. My research career has focused on how ice sheets in both the polar regions flow, and how they are changing. In recent years, I've been increasingly working with modellers to understand the likely future contribution of ice sheets to sea-level rise - an issue that is of interest to policy-makers and coastal communities around the world.

I am currently one of six Science Leaders for BAS's research programme. I lead the programme into ice sheets, which involves developing science projects across a wide range of scientific disciplines, from satellite remote sensing to quaternary geology. I also have several external roles, an honorary Professorship at Swansea University, a role within the writing team of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and as coordinator of a major programme (www.ice2sea.eu) funded by European Union which involves researchers from 24 institutions around the world. This makes my days incredibly varied, usually stimulating and always challenging. In the last year, I've been to the European Parliament to brief MEPs on sea-level rise, worked with a group of international scientists to write the IPCC assessment of cryospheric change (changes to the world's snow and ice cover), and won a NERC grant that will send me back to Antarctica in late-2013.

Being awarded Individual Merit Promotion was a great honour and something of which I'm very proud. It was a tough process but absolutely worth the effort, and knowing that it will be reviewed in a couple of years certainly helps to keep me focused. It also provides a modest budget to spend on supporting activities such as travel or small projects.



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Icebergs calving from the Brunt ice shelf into the Weddell Sea