



# ABER *News*

## University supporting the NHS

Like many individuals and businesses in the area, the University has been playing its part to support the NHS during the Covid-19 crisis.

Departments including IBERS, Geography and Estates, Facilities and Residences have donated personal protective equipment (PPE) for use by frontline workers at Bronglais General Hospital, including almost 13,500 pairs of gloves, 1,000 disposable aprons and hand sanitiser.

Meanwhile staff from the Faculty of Business and Physical Sciences and other colleagues, along with a pupil from Ysgol Penglais School, have joined a UK movement amongst the 3D printing community to produce protective headgear for frontline health workers. The face shields protect the face against larger fluid particles and act as a barrier to stop hand-to-face contact.

Using both University-owned 3D printers and their own personal printers, the group have been able to produce over 300 shields which have been distributed to key workers including care homes, the intensive care unit and veterinary centres.

As well as providing much needed protection, the 3D printed headbands are also environmentally friendly as they are made from PLA, a type of plastic which is both biodegradable and recyclable.

As well as producing and donating personal protective equipment, the University has been making facilities and services available to the Hywel Dda University Health Board.

During April, NHS staff (including 300 returning NHS staff) attended training sessions at our Medrus conference facilities. Meanwhile conferencing accommodation in The Bunkhouse on Penglais Campus was opened up to house keyworkers from the NHS and other emergency service workers.

A number of Aberystwyth University staff also responded to a request from the Health Board for volunteers willing to undertake a range of roles at Bronglais Hospital should their help be required.

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## AberSU Staff and Student Awards 2020

The Department of Psychology won the coveted title of Department of the Year at the Aberystwyth Students' Union Staff and Student Awards 2020, for an unprecedented second consecutive year.

Now in their ninth year, the annual awards celebrate the exceptional contributions of staff, students, academic representatives and departments at the University.

Organised by Aberystwyth Students Union (AberSU) with the support of the University, due to Covid-19, this year's awards were announced live on the AberSU website and on social media channels on Thursday 30 April 2020.

Chloe Wilkinson-Silk, AberSU Academic Affairs Officer for 2019-20 said: "I am extremely grateful that despite all the difficulties right now, we have still had this opportunity to come together and recognise and celebrate the best of the best within our institution. It is a testament to the strong family community here at Aberystwyth University - we may be apart, but we are still together.

"We received an amazing 265 nominations for this year's awards, many of which were extremely personal and heartfelt. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners, who are a vital part of what makes Aberystwyth University the incredible learning community that it is."

Aberystwyth University's Pro Vice-Chancellor: Learning Teaching and Student Experience, Professor Tim Woods said: "In these times of lockdown it is a shame not to have been able to get together to celebrate this year's awards, but I would like to thank AberSU for all the effort they put into the 'virtual' event. Working through the nominations for the AberSU Staff and Student Awards along with the Students' Union Officers has become one of the highlights of my year. This year's warm tributes referred to staff members' dedication, commitment, involvement, innovation, humour and wit. Congratulations to all of the staff and students who were nominated and to the winners of this year's awards."

The winners of the AberSU Staff and Students Awards 2020 are:

### Academic Representative of the Year

Kate Warren - Physics

### Creative Teaching

Dr Gillian McFadyen - Department of International Politics

### Welsh Language Champion

Iwan Davies - Department of Geography and Earth Sciences

### Next Step Award

Annel Latham - School of Education

### Personal Tutor of the Year

Dr Bill Perkins - Department of Geography and Earth Sciences

### Postgraduate Teacher of the Year

Panna Karlinger - School of Education (Tutor for Department of Mathematics)

### Student Staff Member of the Year

Khai Jackson - Department of Psychology

### Student Volunteer of the Year

Daphne Pacey - Department of History and Welsh History

### Support/Service Staff Member of the Year

Siân Jones - Information Services

### Student Mentor of the Year

Rezija Madara Fridrihsone - School of Art

### Supervisor of the Year

Dr Tom Holt - Department of Geography and Earth Sciences

### Lecturer of the Year

Dr Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh - Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies

### Department of the Year

Psychology

## Academics honoured by Welsh Academy

Five Aberystwyth University academics are among the new entrants to the Learned Society of Wales' Fellowship.

The new Fellows from Aberystwyth University are:

- **Professor Glyn Hewinson**, Sêr Cymru II STAR Chair & Director of the Centre of Excellence for Bovine Tuberculosis
- **Professor Emyr Lewis**, Professor of Law and Head of the Department of Law and Criminology
- **Professor Ryszard Piotrowicz**, Professor of Law, Aberystwyth University; Adjunct Professor of Law, University of South Australia; First Vice-President of GRETA, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- **Professor David Rabey**, Professor of Theatre & Theatre Practice, Department of Theatre, Film & Television Studies
- **Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar**, Head of the Graduate School, Faculty Associate Dean of Research & Professor of the Department of Computer Science

They join 38 other new Fellows, all of whom share a link with Wales, its universities or intellectual life and are drawn from all specialisms.

Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University said: "It is a pleasure to learn that a further five Aberystwyth academics have been elected Fellows of the Learned Society of Wales. This honour is well-deserved recognition of our colleagues' prominence within their respective academic disciplines and their valuable contributions to the academic life of Wales."

The Society's Fellowship now numbers 562. Their combined expertise allows the Society to strengthen its contribution to Welsh public life, through its contributions to government policy development, public lectures and seminars and its expanding Wales Studies programme.

## The Vice-Chancellor's Column



You don't need me to tell you that we are living through very strange times. Out of the window, the trees are full of leaves and the summer flowers are beginning to bloom, just like any other June. And yet, in every other way, our lives are very different to how they were.

Although a small number of colleagues continue to carry out business critical roles on our strangely deserted campuses, the majority of us are now working from home, with the numerous challenges that brings. Many colleagues are juggling the care of children and elderly relatives along with day-to-day work responsibilities; others may be dealing with feelings of loneliness and isolation that have come with lockdown.

With all this in mind, first and foremost I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to you all for the remarkable way that you have adapted so willingly and quickly to new ways of working at this challenging time.

Our academic staff and colleagues from Information Services faced the considerable challenge of moving all of our teaching online, and did so with speed and efficiency. Academic registry staff rigorously worked through the implications of changes to examinations and assessments for our students. Colleagues from Information Services staffed the busy coronavirus helpline, answering the many and varied queries from staff, students and parents as the Covid-19 outbreak and its implications unfolded. Colleagues from across the University fed into a webpage of Frequently Asked Questions being maintained on the Coronavirus webpage by the Communications Team.

Like many individuals and businesses in the area, the University has also been using its facilities, equipment and expertise to play its part in supporting the NHS and local community. Departments have donated PPE and a number of staff have been manufacturing 3D-printed visors for frontline health workers. The former nursery building on Penglais Hill is being utilised as a Covid-19 testing centre and out of hours GP

and call centre. We have been housing keyworkers in the Bunkhouse, and MedRus has been used for training NHS staff. There is also the possibility that Ysgol Penweddig will be rehoused to Penglais Campus if the decision is taken for pupils to return to school this academic year.

As an institution significant attention has now turned to the next academic year, and at the beginning of June we announced our intention to bring students back to campus in September. The work of our scenario planning working groups has been crucial to this decision, and their input will be key as we continue to make preparations for September. Again, staff contributions remain vital to this work also - whether you have had input into a working group's considerations or submitted innovative and creative ideas via the process we opened for all staff - I am so grateful for your contributions. I look forward to keeping you updated with developments as this work continues to shape how Aberystwyth University operates in the 2020/21 academic year.

It is more important than ever that we look after our own health and wellbeing at this time. I would encourage staff to visit the new Home Working & Wellbeing Hub ([www.aber.ac.uk/en/staff/home-working-hub](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/staff/home-working-hub)) where you will find tips and advice on working from home including technical aspects, looking after your physical and mental health, home learning opportunities, research guidance and much more. You will also find lots of information and support on pages 10 and 11. Thank you to the staff that put these resources together.

If you are worried about your mental health at this challenging time, please speak to your line manager in the first instance. Advice is also available from Mind and through our Employee Assistance Programme.

One of the key ways to look after our mental health is to stay connected. Please make use of Microsoft Teams to 'meet' with colleagues for a virtual coffee break - it could really brighten somebody else's day as well as your own.

Look after yourselves, and one another.

**Professor Elizabeth Treasure**  
Vice-Chancellor

# Planting trees with the click of a mouse with Ecosia

As of today, Google alone processes on average 40,000+ search queries every second, which equates to over 3.5 billion searches per day or 1.2 trillion searches per year worldwide.

Could you imagine that one day those 1.2 trillion searches could, in theory, equate to over 26 billion trees being planted per year, and how far this would go to helping combat the current 12 million+ hectares of forest land lost across the globe every year?

Well, that is one of the main goals for environmentally driven search engine 'Ecosia', who commit to planting a tree for every 45 internet searches performed, using 80% of their profits generated by advertising revenue from their search engine.

Ecosia have already amassed over 86 million trees planted at over 9,000 planting sites. This has helped species, agriculture and ultimately bio-diversity flourish across the world, especially in underprivileged areas which suffer most from the impact of climate change.

Thanks to suggestions and feedback provided by AberSU and the University's Sustainability Officer based in Estates, at the end of February Aberystwyth University adopted Ecosia as its preferred campus-wide search engine, becoming the sixth University in the UK to do so.

## How you can help

We would love for students and staff to get involved using their personal devices by using the University's personalised URL ([ecosia.co/AberystwythUniversity](https://ecosia.co/AberystwythUniversity)) to install Ecosia on your personal devices so that Ecosia can track the number of trees contributed by you.

If you are already using Ecosia on your personal devices, that's great. However, in order to contribute to the University's total, you would need to uninstall it and then reinstall it through the University's personalised link.

Every month Information Services will be updated by Ecosia on the number of searches and total trees planted using the University's personalised link, and we will receive updates when the University reaches certain milestones, such as our first 10,000 trees.

If every Aberystwyth University student used the University's unique link to install Ecosia and made 5 internet searches a day, this could equate to almost 900 planted trees per day, just from the students!

Such a small change could make a huge difference in helping the University to meet our goal of reducing our carbon footprint and becoming a net-zero University by the end of the financial year 2030-31.

*"It's wonderful to hear that Aberystwyth University has implemented Ecosia as its default search engine after recently submitting the idea through the 'Your Ideas' platform on the AberSU website. As recent examples in Australia and the Amazon rainforest demonstrate, climate change and deforestation are a constant threat to the natural world so it's great to see the University play its part in supporting global reforestation."*

**Charlie Pugh (Year 2 Geography Academic Rep)**

*"The student-led adoption of Ecosia further highlights student awareness of, and engagement with, the climate emergency. We fully support student campaigns and recognise how even small changes, such as changing a search engine, can make a difference."*

**Dr Neil Waghorn (Sustainability Officer)**

*"We're delighted that Information Services has been able to work in partnership with the Students Union to apply Ecosia as the default search engine on all of Aberystwyth University's public computers. We are also looking at promoting Ecosia to our staff and students so they can also use it on their own devices. This will lead to many hundreds of extra trees being planted in the next few years and is part of our commitment to reduce our carbon footprint."*

**Tim Davies (Head of Information Services)**



For further information and FAQs about Ecosia please visit:

[www.ecosia.org](https://www.ecosia.org) | [blog.ecosia.org/ecosia-financial-reports-tree-planting-receipts](https://blog.ecosia.org/ecosia-financial-reports-tree-planting-receipts) | **FAQs** - [ecosia.zendesk.com/hc/en-us](https://ecosia.zendesk.com/hc/en-us)

## University's policy on driving vehicles

At a time when the majority of staff are working from home, we do have colleagues that are still going about their work providing frontline services and keeping our campuses safe and secure. Some of their tasks involve driving, and when normal operations resume, many more of us will return to carrying out work-related driving activities.

Therefore, it is important that staff familiarise themselves with the [Driver Safety Policy](#) which is now available online and covers all areas relating to driving a vehicle on University business.

A new [Driver Safety Handbook](#) has also been produced to help authorised drivers to understand and manage the risks that they face and create when

driving on University business. A copy of the Handbook will be made available in all University vehicles and shared with all new staff as part of their induction.

If you are driving on University business in your own car, you should ensure you have the correct insurance. In order to claim back expenses for mileage, you must submit a Grey Fleet Application Form.

- [Grey Fleet Application Form](#)

If you drive a vehicle on University business other than your own (for example a hire car or one of the University owned vehicles) you must be listed as an Authorised Driver and you will need to complete an authorised driving declaration form.

- [Authorised driver form](#)

If you would like to discuss any section of the policy, handbook or authorised driver registration in detail please do not hesitate to contact a member of the team by emailing [trlstaff@aber.ac.uk](mailto:trlstaff@aber.ac.uk).

The review of the Driver Safety Policy and publication of the Driver Safety Handbook offer a good opportunity to review arrangements relating to work-related driving in your team or department.

Thank you for your co-operation to improve driving standards across the University.

Further information is available at: [www.aber.ac.uk/en/finance/information-for-staff/travel-fleet/fleet](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/finance/information-for-staff/travel-fleet/fleet)

## Research to fast-track Covid-19 test for low income countries

Researchers from the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) are working on a technique to improve testing for the Coronavirus in low income countries.

At the moment, tests in the UK are conducted by the RT-PCR method which analyses RNA from the virus. These tests have to be held in a laboratory using large and expensive specialist equipment.

A team of researchers under the leadership of Dr Arwyn Edwards, Senior Lecturer in Biology at IBERS, are experimenting with an alternative testing method. The testing method would be suitable in countries where there is limited access to testing infrastructure supply chains and could be conducted without requiring specialist virology facilities. The research is organised and funded by the Centre for International Development Research at the University through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales' Global Challenges Research Fund.

Speaking about the research, Dr Edwards said: "The very nature of a pandemic means it is a challenge for global health. It reveals how everyone's health is intimately connected, meaning we must respond globally to help keep communities safe. Where healthcare

infrastructure is less developed the burden of COVID-19 will be greatest. Our work so far with COVID-19 shows the portable tools we have been developing for other projects since 2014 are promising for use in such places."

The researchers working on the study alongside Dr Arwyn Edwards are Dr Amanda Clare and Professor Luis Mur.

As part of the project, the research is drawing upon the expertise of colleagues across the University, working with established networks of international partners and experts in computational biology and respiratory disease.

The research work began in March and it is expected to be completed within a matter of months.



# Making the move to online teaching

Since the end of March most of the University has been working from home, with kitchens, front rooms and studies across the county being turned into offices, and the occasional family pet finding themselves famous on Teams meetings. We talked to our academic staff about the challenges of this unprecedented time and discovered a wealth of initiatives that demonstrate the creativity and dedication of our staff and students.

While many staff members found themselves yearning for the reliability of the campus' broadband network ("Panopto eats my broadband" was a potential headline for this article), the move to online working has had some advantages, with colleagues finding flexible ways to engage with our students. The past few weeks have seen online quizzes in Computer Science, drop-in live Q&A sessions on module choice in International Politics and 'Watch Parties' where students have watched pre-recorded lectures and posted live comments in a discussion group. In order to provide the live physical theatre sessions which make up a portion of their module, a member of the Department for Theatre Film and Television Studies turned her front room into a dance studio, with students linking in from their own spaces for an hour of movement and vocal warm ups. All this has ensured that our approach to teaching continues to be fresh and student-centred.

Conferences also went on-line. The annual national conference for women computing students chaired by

colleagues in Computer Science and initially intended to be held in Stirling, was run virtually for the first time ever, using a combination of the Discord platform for poster sessions, Q&As and panel sessions and Panopto and Canvas for pre-recorded talks. In-house, our Theatre, Film and Television Studies Department developed a Festival of Isolation, inviting students to submit films, performances, readings, writings, installations or images reflecting on the current conditions, for curation onto a public facing website. The aim was to encourage students 'to find creative ways to use current constraints to make new works, impossible in other circumstances.'

One of the biggest challenges was how to retain the community feel that makes working and studying at Aberystwyth so special. Many staff noted the often difficult circumstances in which students have had to navigate this experience, dealing with unreliable broadband connections and a lack of computing equipment or working without the space and facilities that they can access on campus. Providing support for students

and finding ways to ensure continuity of the campus community has been a challenge that staff noted was made easier by the enthusiasm of students themselves. One department noted that their students had created their own online discussion site using the Discord chat platform, with rooms for different topics and an alumni room which had proved popular.

There are many aspects of this experience that staff have noted we should learn from for the future. One staff member from the English department raised the potential for using digital access to international engagements and reducing the burden for visiting speakers. A member of Computer Science staff expressed the view that one of their sessions had worked particularly well as an online activity. Others had enjoyed the new challenge of producing short videos. The connectivity provided by online platforms such as Teams, Zoom and Discord was appreciated in helping to create virtual communities and staff across the University were keen to thank the Information Services department for their help and assistance.

At the same time, it feels in many ways, that we have had glimpses into one another's lives that we have never experienced before. Several staff members confessed to getting very nosy about one another's bookshelves and one International Politics cat has made regular appearances in teaching sessions. We are scattered and isolated, and yet at the same time we have never felt closer.

Looking to the future, it is clear that the current circumstances, while unplanned, have been met with creative solutions by both staff and students that may inform new ways of working, making us more sustainable, environmentally conscious and flexible as an institution.

*Professor Matthew Jarvis, lecturer in the Department of English & Creative Writing, shared this photo of his home workspace, complete with cat Shadow.*



# An update from AberSU

Like many other organisations continuing to work through the current pandemic, AberSU has found new ways of hosting events and SU activities in order to continue supporting Aber students.

All staff and officers are working virtually, an 'AberSU covid-19 peer-support' Facebook group has been set up (which also hosts different activities each week for Aber students to engage with if they wish) and our Advice Service drop in sessions have continued throughout - the only difference being a virtual drop in via Zoom rather than to the SU building.

We have also facilitated sports clubs and society committee elections virtually, as well as encouraging and assisting clubs and societies to hold meetings / activities via Zoom.

## AberSU Celebrates

Our annual AberSU Celebrates awards were held from 28-30 April.

The original plan was to hold three award evenings in and around Aberystwyth to celebrate societies, sports, staff and student achievements. However, with everything that's going on in the world around us, sadly this wasn't possible. But we felt it was important to celebrate and share our appreciation for those who've made a real difference to us. Therefore, all three of the awards evenings were held digitally for the first time.

Videos were published on our website and our Facebook page on the original dates, and a Zoom party was held for those wanting to get dressed up to celebrate the occasion.

Men's Hockey won this year's title of 'Sports Club of the Year', the Bee Conservation Society were crowned 'Society of the Year' and Psychology won 'Department of the Year' for the second consecutive year. Thank you to everyone who submitted one of the 1,083 nominations, and congratulations to our deserving winners.

See p.2 for full Staff and Student Award write up and more information (including nomination details) for all three Awards can be found on the News Section of the AberSU website: [www.abersu.co.uk/news](http://www.abersu.co.uk/news)

## Spring Elections voting week

Our annual Spring Elections voting week was held mid-March with 34% of Aber students turning out to vote for the next team of full-time officers and volunteer officers.

Congratulations to all candidates and good luck to the incoming officer team;

- **SU President** - Nate Pidcock
- **Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President** - Moc Lewis
- **Student Opportunities Officer** - Wojciech Salski
- **Academic Affairs Officer** - Chloe Wilkinson-Silk
- **Wellbeing Officer** - Connor Hunter-Wem

Full results can be found on [www.abersu.co.uk/elections](http://www.abersu.co.uk/elections)

*Incoming AberSU Officer team, left to right: Nate Pidcock (SU President), Moc Lewis (Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President), Chloe Wilkinson-Silk (Academic Affairs Officer), Wojciech Salski (Student Opportunities Officer) and Connor Hunter-Wem (Wellbeing Officer)*



## Exciting news

We are also delighted to share some exciting news; AberSU is a finalist for the Chwarae Teg Womenspire Diversity Champion Award! Finalists for this award have all taken a proactive approach to close the gender divide in the workplace, run successful initiatives or campaigns to directly address gender imbalance for their organisation and can evidence why gender diversity is of benefit to all employees, not just women. Winners will be announced at an event held in Cardiff on 29 September.

During the 2019-20 academic year, 60% of Aber students have been engaged in some aspect of AberSU activity such as joining a sports club or society or voting in the elections.

Stay safe

**AberSU**

# Spotlight on... Information Governance

Information Governance is a newly configured team within the Governance department, and is responsible for supporting the University's compliance with legal and statutory duties in how we manage our information. *ABER News* spoke to Information Governance Manager Julie Archer about the work that the team does:

**What is the main function of the Information Governance Team?**

In a nutshell, to oversee the University's compliance with the various pieces of information-related legislation.

**Who's who in the team?**

Currently, there's just me! I've been at the University since 2007, as Records Manager until last December. From 1 June I'll be joined by two new members of staff. New recruits, but both old hands in University terms: Beckie Sweeney, who has worked in the Accommodation Office for 16 years; and Catrin Griffiths, currently working as a Research Impact Officer, but has held several positions across the University.

**What does the work involve?**

The team is responsible for four main areas: data protection, freedom of information (FOI), records management and archives. The work is mostly about providing advice and guidance on information governance issues in those areas: raising awareness and encouraging good practice.

**What are the highs?**

I enjoy my job enough that the bits that people might consider to be dry and boring – the 'compliance stuff' – is very satisfying, and appeals to my eye for detail.

That said, it's probably the archive work that lends itself more to a warm, fuzzy glow. Like the lady who visited Old College to walk in the footsteps of the father whom she never knew. He was killed in the second world war, before she was born, and I was able to show her some sporting photographs, his student record card, and a glowing teacher training testimonial. There were tears all round, that day.

**What are the lows?**

Dealing with potential personal data breaches. It's never nice to think that something may have gone wrong, but it is a good opportunity to review our processes and procedures. It can



*Left - Catrin Griffiths, Top right - Julie Archer, Bottom right - Beckie Sweeney*

completely derail work plans for a day or more, though!

**Describe a typical day in your office?**

There's absolutely no such thing! It can involve anything from accepting a consignment into our offsite records store, redacting documents, reading data protection clauses in contracts, researching to respond to family history enquiries, tweeting about nice photographs in the archive, and responding to FOI requests.

**How many Freedom of Information requests does the University get each year, and what do you have to do with them?**

We've gone from 50 in the first year of the Act in 2005, to 288 in the 2019 calendar year. We have to liaise with colleagues across the University to gather the information requested and to provide it within the 20-working day deadline. The information has to be released, unless it's covered by one of the Act's exemptions, and there has been no extension to the statutory deadline in light of Covid-19.

**What is the strangest Freedom of Information request you have had?**

There are so many to choose from! Exorcisms, body and organ donation,

how much we spend on wine and, most recently, whether it is illegal to use the title 'Dr' or 'Professor' when you 'have not been awarded'. The strangeness is endless!

**Tell us something we may not know about the work you do?**

I think that some people may only be aware of one or other of my 'hats', depending on how our paths have crossed. So, some of the people who gather statistics for me in response to an FOI request, or provide me with completed Data Privacy Impact Assessments, might be surprised to find me in a basement somewhere salvaging material for the University archive. And the reverse is equally true.

**What's on the horizon for the team?**

The priority is getting the team members fully up to speed and getting out there (albeit virtually, as things stand) to make sure that people know we exist and the ways in which we can help them manage their information more effectively.

On top of that, as soon as we can access Old College – whilst social distancing, of course – we'll be preparing the University's own archive to move out of its home in advance of the renovation work beginning on the building. Exciting times!





# Digital and media support to help combat the impact of Covid-19 from the comfort of your own home

During this unprecedented time, digital and media production and distribution has become a 'way of life' for the majority of us, with almost all social and professional communications conducted through digital channels.

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, Aberystwyth University was awarded funding from the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government to support Welsh businesses and organisations to stay at the forefront of developments within the digital and media industry. The main objective of this project is to provide heavily-subsidised training for the Welsh workforce on new technology and developments within the digital and media production areas.

The Advanced Media Production project is led by Dr Helen Miles and managed by Anwen McConochie and Elin Mair Mabbutt.

The module programme, which can be studied through the medium of Welsh, English or bilingually, is a collaboration between the departments of Theatre, Film and Television Studies, Computer Science and History and Welsh History.

Training is delivered in an industry-responsive and flexible format enabling students to work via supported distance learning to update their technical knowledge. It is designed to allow students to study without the need to take time out of work and is flexible enough to fit studying around work and other commitments.

As the scheme has been supported by the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government, we can offer eligible businesses/employees a Masters level training at the heavily-subsidised rate of £165 per module per employee. Students can choose to study as many modules as they wish or work towards a post-graduate qualification.

One establishment that has already taken advantage of this offer is the National Library of Wales as Annwen Isaac, Human Resources Manager at

the Library explains: "We are fully aware of the need to promote our activities through a variety of digital channels and it is an ever evolving discipline. This training opportunity not only gives our staff advanced tools to promote the work of the Library on digital platforms in a more creative and innovative way, but it also contributes to their continuous personal development.

"By supporting our staff while they study, we are confident that in turn our resources will be strengthened and we'll also gain a wealth of knowledge and will acquire valuable digital skills within our team."

Applications are now open for the June intake. For more information about the programme and eligibility criteria, please get in touch with the Advanced Media Production team on [ccu-amp@aber.ac.uk](mailto:ccu-amp@aber.ac.uk) or visit: [amp.aber.ac.uk](http://amp.aber.ac.uk).



# Support for Home Working during the Coronavirus pandemic

In the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, many of us are working from home for all our working hours for the first time. Even if you're used to it, working from home in these circumstances is not always easy.

## Your workstation at home

If you have not already done so, complete the online **Working Safely with Computers training**.

If you have a home office with a desk, chair and computer please, try and follow the **DSE checklist** as far as you possibly can.

If you don't have a dedicated space, you can still create a home workstation with a bit of creative thinking:

**Chair:** Use a chair with a stable base and cushion to achieve good lumbar support, and as needed, a cushion to sit on to adjust the seat base height.

**Laptop riser:** Use stacks of large books or box files to create a stable platform to mount open laptops, so that your eyeline can be level with the top of the screen.

**Foot support:** Use box files or similar, or cushions to achieve stable foot support.

Take a look at the ideal sitting position image below and mimic this as far as you can.



- Your desk should be as clear as possible, with sufficient light, ventilation and no trailing cords.
- Check your electrical equipment is still safe to use. Do not overload sockets or daisy chain extension leads.
- Make a conscious effort to spend time away from your screen at least 5 to 10 minutes per hour or 15 minutes every two hours.
- Let your manager know if you're having any issues.

Please visit the **Health, Safety and Environment** section of the website for more information: [aber.ac.uk/en/hse/emergency/covid19](http://aber.ac.uk/en/hse/emergency/covid19).

## Physical health

It is important to look after yourself, and there are a few simple things that can help with that.

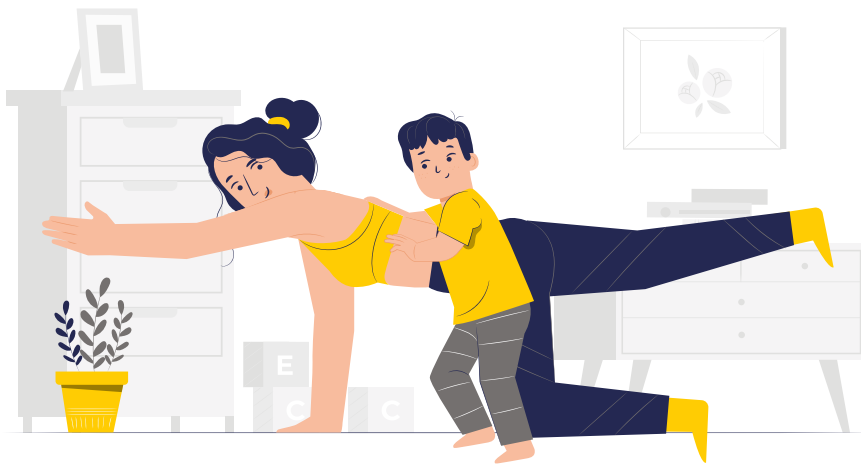
**Think about your diet.** Your appetite might change if your routine changes, or if you're less active than you usually are. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can help your mood and energy levels.

**Drink water regularly.** Drinking enough water is important for your mental and physical health. Changing your routine might affect when you drink or what fluids you drink. It could help to set an alarm or use an app to remind you.

**Build physical activity** into your daily routine, if possible.

The **University Sports Centre** is providing free health and wellbeing #FitTips and workouts to help you





stay fit and healthy from your home. Just login to their **Facebook page** to access the free resource. Leaving home to exercise is also allowed under the current regulations.

If traditional exercise isn't your thing, there are **other options** for all ages and abilities, including

- housework
- gardening
- dancing to music
- going up and down stairs
- sitting less – if you notice you've been sitting down for an hour, just getting up or changing position can help

Please visit the **Health and Wellbeing** section of the website for more information: [aber.ac.uk/en/staff/health-wellbeing](http://aber.ac.uk/en/staff/health-wellbeing)

## Mental wellbeing

It is vital that we look after our mental health and wellbeing while working from home.

Mental health charity **Mind** have brought together some practical information including tips on ways to relax and be creative. These include

- arts and crafts, such as drawing, painting, collage, sewing, craft kits or upcycling
- DIY
- colouring
- mindfulness
- music
- writing
- yoga
- meditation

**Care first**, our employee assistance programme offers free confidential support for any workplace or personal issue over the telephone or online 24/7. You can access the service via **0800 174319** or follow the link from the HR page: [aber.ac.uk/en/hr](http://aber.ac.uk/en/hr)

Stay connected with current events, but be careful where you get news and health information from. Having **good, sound information** helps to diminish anxiety and helps us feel more in control. You can get up-to-date information and advice from

- **Welsh Government**
- **UK Government**
- **Public Health Wales**

Please continue to check our coronavirus information webpage: [aber.ac.uk/coronavirus](http://aber.ac.uk/coronavirus) for the latest information and **frequently asked questions**.

## Keeping in touch

It is more important than ever we support each other as a community and take time to check on each other's wellbeing.

Whatever you do, please take time to chat to colleagues, share a virtual coffee or lunchbreak, whatever it takes to brighten up your day.

## Professional development

Many staff feel that this could be an opportune time to brush up on their skills and to perhaps look to complete some training that they have been meaning to get around to for a while.

The University have published a page that collates a vast range of training courses that can be undertaken online. The list of courses can be found here: [www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/online-training](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/online-training).

## Any questions or queries?

If you have any other questions or queries, or can think of other ways in which the University can offer further practical assistance, please email [coronavirus@aber.ac.uk](mailto:coronavirus@aber.ac.uk) or contact the dedicated helpline on **01970 62 2483**, which is open 9am-5pm every day.



## In addition to the day job

Alison Pierse is Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator and Tutor, and has worked for the University for over two decades. In addition to the day job, she is a mosaic artist and runs art discovery tours around Aberystwyth under the name Aberdabadoo.

### What is it about creating mosaics that particularly appeals to you?

It is a bit like the process of printmaking in that it has a number of different stages. The design process is mentally challenging and requires full attention. The positioning of the tiles allows me to let my mind wander a bit, but I still need to focus on the *andamento* (the flow of the mosaic). The grouting process is like the revealing of a print; I usually listen to podcasts during this process. I also paint, and many designs start from a painting that has been re-composed. Mosaic requires design skills; I trained in three dimensional design.

### What's the most exciting commission you have had?

I've had a few; the biggest was a 4.5 metre mosaic to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, made at a school in 4 days with 300 children and all the staff. It portrays that wild night when fireworks were set off over Buckingham Palace. The commission was to amalgamate the Jubilee with the Olympics, which both took place in 2012. It is on the exterior wall of a school in Essex and at dusk it takes on a whole new life as I used mirrors which reflect the light. I have to say it was a bonkers week. I liked seeing the children proudly showing their parents which section they had worked on. It was a very ambitious project that I called 'Bigger than Ben Hur'.

### Do you prefer teaching or learning?

Both. I love to see students of any age blossom. I like to see the light and excitement in their eyes, revelling in something they have achieved. I am a lifelong learner too, why wouldn't I be? I wouldn't work in Lifelong Learning if I didn't believe in the philosophy that you are never too old to learn new things. My Mum did a degree at the age 70; I guess she passed that love of learning down to me.

### What gave you the idea to run art discovery tours around Aberystwyth?

Aberystwyth has some great entrances and doorways decorated with mosaic tiles. Some towns have destroyed these beautiful footplates. We should be appreciating our heritage, and if through my 'A Summer's Night On The Tiles' walks, I can open people's eyes to what we have, maybe there is more chance these parts of history will be saved. Then, of course we have the Old College's Voysey mosaic. Tourists are so impressed with what we have here.

### How has the Covid-19 outbreak provided both challenges and opportunities to you?

To be honest, I think I have been self-isolating all my life; I am a quiet person at heart. Yes, for the moment, all my walks have been cancelled and so has my private mosaic course. The bonus, though, is that it has kept me at home; we have had great weather and I have concentrated on designing. I am never happier than when I am doing a bit of nibbling in the garden. One recent piece is a gecko that has been photographed at various stages to make a PowerPoint for a distance learning course that I have designed called 'Two Days of Mosaic'. Walks will happen again when we all resume



normality, whatever that is. Covid-19 has also allowed me to design some completely new distance-learning courses, some are in art practice, others are professional development courses, and there is also a 5-credit art history module. It has been a very rewarding intellectual challenge. Designing courses is also creative.

### If you found yourself with a whole day with nothing planned, what would you fill the day with?

Easy answer, that one - some nibbling of tesserae (mosaic tiles)! My neighbours will vouch for that - they can hear the click-click of the tiles being broken. I am in my element if I can I work outside in good light with the sun on my back. I often think of myself as the lady in the Swiss-style weather houses, when the sun appears, out comes me and my mosaic tiles!

### Where can people find out more about your work?

On my Aberdabadoo website there is more about my commissions, teaching, and a weekly Facebook learning thread - [www.aberdabadoo.co.uk](http://www.aberdabadoo.co.uk).







*Sheep grazing on pastureland in southern Piedmont, Italy*

# My research



Emanuele Amo graduated in humanities from Università degli Studi di Torino (University of Turin, Italy) in 2016, before completing a Masters in Human Geography at University of Bristol in 2018. He is now studying for his PhD in the Department of Geography and

Earth Sciences, and has recently been looking at the ways that small food producers across the globe are feeling the impact of the Covid-19 crisis.

Small food producers across the world are being hit hard by the Covid-19 crisis. In Europe, where many countries have seen strict quarantine regimes, farmers are struggling to keep their businesses open. In most cases, producers are not facing a production issue, as for instance may occur during a drought, but rather a problem of distribution. Small farmers can still produce, but their traditional sales channels are not available to them, and since distributors and buyers have stopped working it is very hard for producers to reach consumers, particularly in cities.

The disappearance of the tourism industry is another often overlooked problem for farmers. Spring is the season when tourists usually flock to the countryside, and those producers that also operate as restaurants, farm shops or holiday lets are missing one of the most lucrative periods of the year.

Of course, the severity of the situation differs from country to country, and since governments have adopted different strategies to cope with the virus and to support producers, it is difficult to obtain an overview of the situation across the continent. However, it is possible to identify a number of issues and responses common to several countries.

Firstly, there is the role of the European Union. As I recently reported in an article on small-scale Italian cheese makers, food producers do not feel sufficiently supported by the EU. The producers I interviewed reported that so far the EU has not offered any concrete support to small food producers and that, to date, no EU body has delivered a clear economic strategy to allow producers to survive the crisis.

This accusation is somewhat unfair, as issues such as funding for small farmers are primarily the responsibility of national governments, not the EU. Consequently, the real problem for small farmers across Europe during the Covid-19 crisis has been the failure of governments to support each other

economically and to develop common strategies to deal with the crisis through the EU institutions which have been created precisely for this purpose.

If national governments respond differently and EU institutions struggle to create strategies of mutual support, we need to look to international organisations such as the Slow Food Movement to find an example of a concrete and cohesive response.

A global, grassroots organisation established in the 1980s, Slow Food has grown into an international movement involving millions of people across 150 countries. Slow Food links the pleasure of food with a commitment to the community and the environment, campaigning for local food producers, defending regional traditions and recognising the strong connections between plate, planet, people, politics and culture.

Since one of the main goals of food movements is to create international communities of farmers to radically change the current production system, the Covid-19 crisis has provided the opportunity to showcase their capability for mobilising large number of people in solidarity initiatives. Particularly important have been those actions aiming to rebuild links between producers and consumers. Farmers' delivery services, online maps locating producers and marketing campaigns are among the numerous initiatives that social movements have developed through Europe to help consumers to remain in contact with producers and to reconnect rural areas with cities.

Beyond the idea that the current crisis could represent a good opportunity to promote food sovereignty and then to change our current system of food production and consumption, small farmers are now facing a very difficult time and many rural cultures and traditions are at risk of disappearing altogether.

As the EU is unable to provide direct support to local producers, practical solutions can only be developed by national governments or social movements. Whereas the former are merely interested in the national wealth, social movements are concretely trying to promote aid projects on an international scale. Organisations like Slow Food now claim their importance within the economic and political scenario and rejoice in their capability of replacing governments and public institutions in time of crisis.

However, there is not much to be cheerful about if the European leadership in small food production is nowadays entrusted to groups of willing citizens.

# We Love Aberystwyth

Matt Wilby is a Technician in the Department of Psychology. In his spare time he assists with the 'We Love Aberystwyth' initiative which has become a vehicle for support for local businesses and residents at this unprecedented time.

## When, how and why did the We Love Aberystwyth initiative start?

We Love Aberystwyth was set up about two years ago by photography enthusiast, Jonny Evans from Waunfawr. It began on Instagram as a platform for brilliant local photographers to share their work. I recently began to help with running the initiative, and in the past two months the aim and focus of 'We Love Aberystwyth' has broadened to trying to make the lives of local residents and businesses easier during the Covid-19 crisis.

## How has We Love Aberystwyth developed to support people during the Covid-19 crisis?

The project was dreamt up the Saturday before the main government call for people to stay at home. We thought that given the relative success and reach of We Love Aberystwyth, along with the various great people we both knew who we thought could help us, there was something we could and should do to try and help the community.

Almost 2 weeks later, working closely with the fantastic Gwe Cambrian Web (who, like everyone, donated their time for free), hosts of local businesses and too many individuals to thank in one place, we managed to launch the site and publicise it widely (again with lots of help from many brilliant people).

Since the launch, many more businesses and individuals have come on-board, and we have received numerous suggestions of other groups we can link to.

## What content can be found on the We Love Aberystwyth website?

Local businesses are able to advertise on the website for free, meaning it is helping businesses to stay afloat at this difficult time, whilst also supporting members of the Aberystwyth community who want to find local places to buy food or find ways of supporting their physical health and mental wellbeing.

## What's next for the We Love Aberystwyth website?

We plan to add more to the project as time goes on. For example, we are now asking for people to send in photographs of rainbow drawings by them or their children. We hosted our first quiz on Instagram and now have a JustGiving link from our website to help local Covid-related charity causes (Bronglais Hospital, Aberystwyth Food Bank, Mind Aberystwyth and West Wales Domestic Abuse Service) alongside other ideas we can hopefully get off the ground!

## How can people help if they want to?

One of our next projects is to create a leaflet version of the site to be distributed to those who don't have access to the internet (with the help of the University, which has agreed to print the leaflets for free), and working on getting both the website and the leaflet to be bilingual - any help with that especially would be massively useful!

The main things we'd like to ask people to do is to share the site to those who might benefit, individuals or businesses, stay safe and support your community.

[www.weloveaberystwyth.co.uk](http://www.weloveaberystwyth.co.uk)



# Appointments

A warm welcome to colleagues who have joined the University in recent months, including:

## FACULTY OF EARTH AND LIFE SCIENCES



**Sally Hore** has been appointed as Principal Lead in Healthcare Education. As a nurse with over 27 years' experience, Sally has held a variety of roles in clinical practice, research and education. Since 2002 she has been involved with and developed multidisciplinary healthcare education at Swansea

University before taking a seconded position in 2018 with Hywel Dda University Health Board as their Senior Nurse for Education and Training. Sally has a passion for designing and delivering innovative healthcare education which incorporates evidence-based patient centred care that has a positive impact on both practitioners and patients.

## ABERYSTWYTH SCHOOL OF VETERINARY SCIENCE



**Professor Darrell Abernethy** has been appointed Head of the new Aberystwyth School of Veterinary Science, which is due to have its first intake of students in 2021. Darrell is a veterinary epidemiologist who obtained his PhD from the Royal Veterinary College. He has previously served as a department head and dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Pretoria, South

Africa. His research interests include bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis, avian health, and the role of wildlife in poverty alleviation.

## DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND CRIMINOLOGY



**Dr Sam Poyser** joins us from the University of Nottingham where she was a Lecturer in Criminology. Sam is an alumnus of the University of Exeter. Her research focuses primarily on miscarriages of justice, particularly their causes and consequences. She has worked with the police and other investigators in a variety of

settings, delivering training on lessons that can be learnt from miscarriages. She is also interested in injustices experienced by non-human victims. Sam has published widely in her field and her teaching showcases a passion for hitherto marginalised areas of criminology.

**Bethan Poyser** joins us from Nottingham Trent University, as a Lecturer in Criminology. Bethan's research focusses upon heritage crime, which she has just completed her PhD in. Her other research interests include rural and wildlife crime, policing, and victimology, and she has published in the areas of heritage crime and rural crime.



## DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE



**Abid Khan** has joined the department as lecturer. He graduated from Harbin Institute of Technology. Before, joining Aberystwyth he worked as assistant professor of computer science at CUI, Islamabad. His research interests include applied cryptography, security & privacy

issues in distributed systems including smart grids, cloud computing, IoT and blockchain.

## INSTITUTE OF BIOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND RURAL SCIENCES



**Dr Aiswarya Girija** has joined the University as a Marie-Curie postdoctoral researcher at IBERS. She will be working with Professor Luis Mur and will apply omics and gene editing strategies to improve the orphan crop, Teff. She obtained her PhD from India and recently completed her post doctorate from MIGAL-Galilee research institute, Israel. Her research interests

are to understand adaptive mechanism of plants in tough environmental conditions using omics platform.

**Dr Amanda Gibson** recently joined IBERS as Lecturer in Innate Immunology. She gained her PhD in Molecular Immunology in 2009 from the Royal Veterinary College, University of London. Amanda joins the Sêr Cymru team in the Centre of Excellence for Bovine TB. Her research focuses on the role of the innate immune system in the progression of TB in order to develop improved vaccines and diagnostics for bovine TB.







**Dr Sibhekiso Siphambili** recently joined the 'BeefQ' project in her role as Post-Doctoral Research Associate. She graduated with a doctorate in food science from the University College Dublin. Her research interests include meat quality, animal nutrition and animal welfare.

**GLOBAL MARKETING & STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

**Harriet Howse** has joined the University as Head of International Recruitment and Development. Harriet has ten years' experience in International Higher Education, most recently working at Queen Mary University of London where she was Head of International Partnerships. She holds a postgraduate qualification in the Management of International Higher Education and during her undergraduate studies spent a year living in Chile, teaching English at a university.



**ADVANCED MEDIA PRODUCTION TEAM**



**Elin Mair Mabbutt** has joined the Advanced Media Production team as its Project Manager. A Law and Politics graduate from Cardiff University, Elin previously worked within the International Office before joining the Events Team in the Marketing Department

with specific responsibility for the Big Welcome Weekend & Orientation Week and the AU presence at the Royal Welsh Show and Maes B at the National Eisteddfod.

**INFORMATION SERVICES**



**Gwern Hywel** has been appointed CRM Project Manager for Information Services. Gwern re-joins the University after a brief spell at the University of Manchester as the Programme Manager for the Institute for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence. Gwern has held several

project management roles within Higher Education and is looking forward to implementing a new CRM for the student lifecycle at the University.

**CENTRE FOR WELSH LANGUAGE SERVICES**

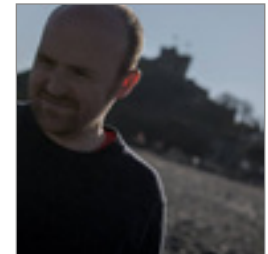


**Dylan Hughes** has been joined the University as Welsh Language Services Manager. Originally from Aberystwyth, Dylan graduated in 2008 from Cardiff University in BSc Geography (Human) and Planning before starting work for Cardiff Council. Dylan joins the University from the Bilingual

Cardiff department of Cardiff Council which has responsibility for translation services, compliance with the Welsh Language Standards and promoting the language through the 'Bilingual Cardiff 2017-22' Strategy. In his new role, Dylan will be responsible for promoting the Welsh language within the institution and assisting the University to operate bilingually.

**COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**Colin Nosworthy** has joined the team as a Communications Officer. Before coming to work for the University, Colin worked in the Senedd in Cardiff before working for ten years for the language campaign group Cymdeithas yr Iaith. Colin originally hails from Llandrindod in Powys. He graduated in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from Oxford University and also holds qualifications in law from Cardiff and South Wales Universities.



**FINANCE DEPARTMENT**



**Mathew Clarke** joined the Finance Department as a Tax & Financial Accountant in April 2020. A graduate of Aberystwyth University and chartered certified accountant, Mathew has experience working with public sector and charity accounts. In July 2017, Mathew was a shortlisted and highly commended finalist as Best Newcomer

in Finance in the National Housing Federation awards resulting from his positive impact on the housing finance sector.

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Ryan O'Kane** has recently joined Student Support Services as a Specialist Mental Health Mentor to support students with diagnosed mental health conditions. Ryan has worked for a number of small charities supporting people to improve their local communities and environment, most recently running a training programme for Powys



Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO). Ryan is a qualified psychosynthesis counsellor, trained youth mentor and group facilitator. Ryan was formerly a lecturer in international development studies at the University of East London, and is particularly interested in the role of cultural and political forces in wellbeing and mental health.

## Obituaries

### Dr Tedi Millward (1930-2020)

The Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University has expressed her deepest sympathies to the family of Dr Edward Millward following his passing. Dr Edward 'Tedi' Millward was a lecturer in Welsh at Aberystwyth University.

Professor Elizabeth Treasure said: "It is with great sadness that we learn of the passing of such a true friend of Aberystwyth University, and Wales. Dr Tedi Millward played a hugely influential role in the study of Welsh over many decades, and his legacy will be an abiding one which will continue to inform all those who follow in his footsteps. Tedi made a vast contribution both in academia and society at large and he will be remembered so fondly as a man of deep principle and decency.

"Tedi will be missed by so many people, particularly in the field of the Welsh language and culture to which he dedicated an academic lifetime. We send our deepest condolences to his family and closest friends."

Head of the Department of Welsh at Aberystwyth University, Dr Cathryn Charnell-White said: "His scholarly horizons were broad, not only because his interests encompassed the long eighteenth century and the Victorian period, but because he was also a nuanced interpreter of the place that Wales and the Welsh language had in the world. Through his textual and critical scholarship on Jac Glan-y-Gors, Twm o'r Nant, the 'eisteddfodic' epic, Eben Fardd, Gwilym Hiraethog, Ceiriog, Daniel Owen, and Beriah Gwynfe Evans, Tedi Millward gave us a discerning and eloquent insight into the 'nation of braves' ('cenedl o bobl ddewrion') and its complex psychology."

### Bruce Tyler (1931-2020)

**Bruce Tyler was Head of the Plant Genetic Resources Unit (Welsh Plant Breeding Station/IGER/IBERS)**

His career began in 1947 at the Grassland Improvement Station at Drayton as an Assistant Scientific Officer under the guidance of William Davis who went on to set up the Grassland Research Institute at Hurley. He was appointed to the WPBS in 1957 after graduating from UCNW Bangor.

During his time at Aberystwyth, he was instrumental in implementing the world-wide collection, evaluation and ex-situ conservation of seeds of primary importance to temperate grassland agricultural production. The germplasm collected and curated by the PGRU were the foundations of the many highly successful Aberystwyth grass and legume cultivars generated, and still being generated, by the plant breeding teams at Gogerddan over many decades that have provided high yielding, high quality forage for grassland farmers world-wide.

Bruce was keenly aware of the importance of plant collection, evaluation, ex-situ propagation and long-term storage of seed in the face of the multiple threats of climate change, the advance of modern agriculture and increased urbanisation on the erosion of valuable plant genetic resources. Under his direction, the Plant Genetic Resources Unit became a key player of the European Co-operative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources.

An enthusiastic communicator, Bruce became a well-respected practitioner and educator in the field of plant genetic resource collection and curation.

He retired in 1991 after leading the Plant Genetic Resources Unit at Gogerddan for many years, and left an indelible impression on his colleagues and collaborators who remember him with fondness and respect in equal measure.

### Joshua King (1987-2020)

Josh joined the University in December 2017 as a Residential cleaning operative, and was then appointed to the role of Facilities Porter in January 2019.

The following tribute has been prepared by Josh's colleagues in Facilities:

"The tragic news of Josh's death came as a huge shock to us all. Josh joined the Estates, Facilities and Residences Team in 2017 as one of our team of cleaning operatives working in the residential buildings. His positive and happy nature shone through, and he quickly became known as a great team player who was pro-active and always willing to help others.

He was promoted in 2019 to join the Facilities Porter Team where he continued to be a valuable member of the team, helping out in all areas when others were on holiday or absent from work.

Josh loved to walk and we would often meet him after a day's work (which involved walking most of the time), walking along the prom and up Consti to relax. He also talked of the enjoyment he got from reading and photography.

When asked for their memories of Josh, his work colleagues talk fondly of a kind natured person who liked to be part of the team.

We will miss our ray of sunshine - he leaves a hole in our team that will not easily be filled. Our heartfelt condolences go to Josh's family and friends."