

Countryside

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NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2010

First Year Tour of Snowdonia

First year countryside recreation and tourism students joined other tourism students for a study tour to Snowdonia.

This three day tour was based in the Swallow Falls Youth Hostel near Betws y Coed. The first stop of the tour was the historic town of Caernarfon, where the students examined the role of tourism in urban regeneration.

The group also looked around the famous castle and explored the town and the tourism developments that have occurred there. Day two took the students to Blaenau Ffestiniog, to visit the Llechwedd Slate Mine and Museum, including a chance to go underground to discover what life was like for a miner. Later, the students heard a talk about the role of tourism in the regeneration of the town. Blaenau Ffestiniog made a particularly interesting case study because of its original exclusion from the boundaries the Snowdonia National Park; a decision which is now in the process of being revisited and possibly reversed. The final day dawned dry and bright for the students to visit the Italianate 'fairytale' village of Portmeirion before going on to examine traditional seaside tourism in the town of Barmouth.



Students go underground at Llechwedd Slate Mine

IBERS Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

List of Courses

BSc

Countryside Conservation
Countryside Management

Foundation Degree

Countryside Conservation
Countryside Management

Higher National Diploma

Countryside Conservation
Countryside Management

Interested?

Phone **Fay Hollick** on **01970 621622**



Chris becomes warden of Skomer Island

Congratulations to one of our past students, Chris Taylor who has recently gained the fantastic job of being the warden for Skomer Island in Pembrokeshire.

Skomer is an internationally important nature reserve owned by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. As well as about 13,000 puffins, it is home to about 120,000 pairs of manx shearwaters and many thousands of kittiwakes, guillemots and razorbills, making it the most important seabird colony in Britain. On

getting the job Chris stated, "It's a privilege to be able to live in such a fantastic location, and have the opportunity to make a positive impact on such an incredibly important site".

Chris studied HND Countryside Management before progressing onto the BSc in Countryside Management. He followed this by taking an MSc in Environmental Impact Assessment here at Aberystwyth.



Jasper with villagers in the Solomon Islands

Jasper publishes rainforest research

For his dissertation fieldwork, BSc Countryside Conservation student Jasper Kenter spent ten weeks in the Solomon Islands (SI) researching environmental values. The SI, located northeast of

New Guinea, has an extraordinarily high number of endemic species, as well as indigenous languages and cultures. To understand the value of ecosystems in Kahua, a remote region of the SI, Jasper developed a new participatory research method.

“My role was to facilitate a process of self-understanding of social-ecological problems. Local people are very capable of analysing their own realities. Research should not just extract data but aim to benefit local communities as much as possible. It was very exciting, as this approach has not been used before in valuing the environment, and I didn’t know if it would work. It was hard work as well, because of the cultural differences and the tropical environment.”

Jasper has submitted an academic paper based on his dissertation research to the high impact journal *Global Environmental Change* and is working on a second peer reviewed paper with environmental economics lecturer Mike Christie. Part of Jasper’s funding came from the WAC club, which provides one or more yearly travel awards from profit made at the IBERS Llanbadarn tea bar. He received the award again this year to attend an ecological economics conference in Germany. Now that he has completed his BSc in Aberystwyth, he will start a PhD on ecosystem services at the University of Aberdeen.

Students help open up the countryside

First year HND and Foundation Degree students have recently worked on opening up public footpaths that link the village of Pennant to the Ceredigion Coastal Path.

This provides a linear route of about three miles giving fine views of the coast and the hills of Snowdonia in particular. The opening of the route has given the residents of Pennant the possibility of a short circular walk, and provides scope for a longer circular walk which can in turn link up with the promoted Dylan Thomas Trail.

A sense of ‘Hiraeth’ was achieved by rebuilding old stone step stiles that had fallen into disrepair. The remains of an old stone footbridge were unearthed and used to construct steps onto a new wooden footbridge. This was built in the workshop and transported to site with the help of the landowner. Sweet chestnut self-closing kissing gates, hand crafted by the students, were used at either end of the route. In addition, much fencing and clearance work was undertaken, pedestrian and field gates were replaced and clawdd walls repaired.

The project was made possible by officers from the Coast & Countryside section of Ceredigion County Council. Thanks are due to all the landowners concerned for their cooperation, patience and hospitality.



Students making path improvements

Year 1 study week in Shropshire

The first year residential field course to Shropshire took place during May. There were visits to a diverse range of places, integrating material taught in the classroom from across the range of first year modules. In particular the visits provoked discussion about the ever changing nature of the countryside. The trip also provides a nice social occasion to round off the year especially for those students about to embark on their year long work placements.



Surveying vegetation on the Stiperstones.

Students win Travel Awards

Three IBERS students have recently been successful in gaining Welfare and Celebration Club (WAC) travel awards. These awards of up to £500, are presented to students who wish to further their career opportunities by travelling to attend conferences or to carry out research for their dissertation or project. The WAC Club runs the tea bar at IBERS, Llanbadarn Campus for staff and students during the year, and any profits are used for the travel awards.

Jonas Krause-Heiber (2nd year BSc Countryside Management) is undertaking a long-distance trail user survey during the summer, for his final year dissertation. Jasper Kenter (final year BSc Countryside Management) is attending the International Society for Ecological Economics global conference in Oldenburg and Bremen, Germany, on ecosystem services valuation and adaptation to climate change, in preparation for starting a PhD on the subject at the University of Aberdeen.

Committee Chair and Lecturer in Countryside Management, Dr Graham Harris, commented, “once again the WAC Club is pleased to be able to continue to support these student in their work which we consider to be an important part of our role in addition to our social function”.

Bumper year for IBERS’s social science postgrads

Social science post-graduate research within IBERS has seen a bumper year with four students graduating this July. The diverse range of research topics and geographic spread of studies demonstrate the breadth of social science research within IBERS. Many congratulations to the following students, and we wish you the best for your future careers:

- Joseph Dzanja (PhD) *Defining and Measuring Social Capital: A case study of rural development in Malawi.*
- Christian Schader (PhD) *Cost-effectiveness of organic farming for achieving environmental policy targets in Switzerland.*
- Michelle Webber (PhD) *The economic and social value of our Earth heritage.*
- Ben Tantua (MPhil). *An evaluation of the potential of participatory approaches to rural development in Nigeria’s oil economy. Shropshire study tour. Dave Powell*

Prizes

Congratulations to Jasper Kenter, who studied BSc Countryside Conservation, for being awarded the Stapleton Prize for being the best final year student in IBERS. Congratulations also to Dolly Schwenk who studied BSc Countryside Management, who has been awarded the prize of best BSc countryside student of the year. These are both very well deserved prizes. Well done.