

Countryside

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NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2009

IBERS ABERYSTWYTH
 Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences

Countryside Recreation and Tourism students explore North Wales

Year one students studying Countryside Recreation and Tourism and Tourism Management recently returned from an enjoyable 3-day study tour to North Wales. The students stayed in a hostel located in the heart of the Snowdonia National Park, opposite the impressive Swallow Falls waterfall. They studied urban regeneration through tourism; the role of tourism in National Parks and heritage tourism. These themes were developed through visits to Caernarfon, Betws y Coed, Beddgelert, a trip on the Welsh Highland Railway, The Electric Mountain, the National Slate Museum at Llanberis, the famous 'Prisoner' village of Portmeirion and the coastal resort of Barmouth. Evening workshops and role-plays integrated material developed through the visits.



Students on the Welsh Highland Railway

Student research

Year 3 BSc degree students have to undertake a piece of research work (known as a dissertation). Students can choose their own research areas under the guidance of academic staff. As usual this year we have had a range of interesting projects including:

- **Community woodlands in Wales – a community's perception, attitudes and preferences**
- **Effect of altitude on ground beetle distribution**
- **Do different commercial bird seed mixes attract different species of birds?**
- **The riparian influences on invertebrate communities in lowland river systems**
- **Boundaries to access - a stakeholder analysis of increased access to inland waterways**

New EU Farmland Biodiversity project

Peter Dennis and colleagues at IBERS have been awarded EU funding for the "BioBio" project (Indicators for biodiversity in organic/ low-input farming systems). Peter leads Work Package 2 and is currently working with partners in nine European countries to review and select direct and indirect measures of biodiversity on farmland before August. Then he will host an international workshop here in Aberystwyth during September to agree the content of the report so that it can be concluded in October. Finally, a field instruction manual will be produced before November so that each candidate biodiversity indicator can be field validated on farms across Europe during 2010.

Aberystwyth Conservation Volunteers Society

The Society enjoyed a successful year attracting a record membership of 330

List of Courses

BSc

Countryside Conservation
 Countryside Management
 Countryside Recreation and Tourism
 Sustainable Rural Development

Foundation Degree

Countryside Conservation
 Countryside Management
 Countryside Recreation and Tourism

Higher National Diploma

Countryside Conservation
 Countryside Management
 Countryside Recreation and Tourism

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students and securing further funding through KeepWalesTidy. It held 22 taskdays with organisations including the RSPB, the Countryside Council for Wales, Ceredigion County Council and Mentro Lluest. Work undertaken ranged from footpath maintenance and habitat management to construction and installation of boardwalks, stiles and bridges. Other highlights were establishing new contacts with Communities First in Penparcau and the Shared Earth Trust at Denmark Farm. Indeed the group had such a successful year that they were awarded the 'Society of the Year' award by the University's Guild of Students. Well done!



Digging a pond for a wildlife garden

Study Tour to Shropshire

The first year Countryside Management and Conservation study tour at the beginning of May was based in Shropshire. Visits were made to a wide range of habitats including the National Nature Reserve at Whixall Moss, a lowland raised peat bog and the scene of experimental, large scale restoration work. Until the early 1990s the bog was being drained, vegetation stripped off and the peat removed for sale to gardeners. A public outcry led to the site being bought by the conservation agencies of England and Wales (the site straddles the border) and now the water table is being slowly raised by blocking old drains, and the surrounding land is being brought into management agreements. Witnessing the changes to the site as the peat becomes waterlogged once more and the bog mosses and other specialised plants recolonise is impressive. As well as the bog plants, students also saw a range of birds including curlews, hobby, green woodpecker and cuckoo; however the highlight was the sight of a pair of storks flying almost overhead before landing close by. At least four Aber students have spent their HND work experience periods on Whixall contributing to the pioneering conservation of this exceptional site and two of them, including current student, Tom Whitchurch, have chosen to use the peat bog as the subject of their dissertation. Tom will be carrying out his fieldwork this summer investigating how the changing water levels are affecting the plant communities.



Whixall Moss

Students help open new walking route

First year HND/Foundation Degree students on the Practical Estate Skills module have been involved with the installation of a new footbridge, three kissing gates and the clearance of overgrowth in order to open a new circular walk near Aberystwyth.

This work was carried out in collaboration with Ceredigion County Council's Coast and Countryside Unit, and was funded by the Welsh Assembly Government as part of a series of schemes aimed at implementing Ceredigion's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. These types of projects provide the students with invaluable practical experience in the field, are very rewarding to complete and help the local community and others to enjoy the countryside.

Students win Travel Awards

Four IBERS students have been successful in gaining travel awards of up to £500 from the WAC (Welfare and Celebration) Club. These awards are funded from profits from the departmental coffee bar.



This year's winners are undertaking a range of projects and practical experiences as part of their studies. Gareth Jeffreys (2nd year BSc Zoology) is going to carry out whale shark research off the coast of South Africa and the Seychelles with the Marine Conservation Society. Jasper Kenter (2nd year BSc Countryside Management) is travelling to the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific to investigate eliciting environmental values from rural communities which face increasing threats to their sustainability. Dexter Farr (1st year HND Countryside Management) is

going to work for the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority as part of his work experience programme. Jon McCalmont (1st year Foundation Degree Countryside Management) is embarking on a six week trip to Western Australia to work on a volunteer placement with the Department of the Environment on the Forestcheck research plots, including invertebrate sampling and trapping/radio tracking of small marsupials.

Prizes

**BSc Countryside schemes
Student of the Year: Jay
Stebbings**

**FDS / HND Countryside
schemes Student of the Year:
David Ward**