

GeogSoc News

from James Ledingham,
GeogSoc President.

Hi, my name is James and I am in my final year studying BA Geography. I was recently elected as President of the Geography Society and I am really excited about the year ahead! The Geography Society is entirely student run with full support from the department. It plays a key role in creating a friendly and social atmosphere, which brings together staff and students from all year groups. The Geog Soc committee organises great events throughout the year. Our first major social was the 'European Countries Bar Crawl' in October. This was a sell-out event and a great night was had by all! Other events include the Christmas fancy dress party, the Annual Geography Ball, quiz nights, and curry evenings. In addition to these social events, there are many ways to get involved with Geog Soc. Join the geography football team, help us with a charity event or volunteer with the environment team...there are some great opportunities! From all in the Geography Society, we look forward to seeing you soon!

[Link to all of the latest
Geography news articles:
http://www.le.ac.uk/geography/](http://www.le.ac.uk/geography/)

SW USA Field Report

Fieldtrips are among the most exciting components of any geography degree and the third year BA Geography trip to the South West USA was no exception. After flying into Las Vegas we visited some of the world's most scenic and iconic landscapes, including the Grand Canyon and Monument Valley. Importantly, the trip provided us with an opportunity to critically evaluate competing claims to natural resources in the SW USA. Towards the end of the trip we were also lucky enough to spend an evening with a group of people from the local Navajo community. This was a fascinating experience that few of

us will forget. All of those who went on this fieldtrip unanimously rate it as one of their best University experiences to date.

Other third year options include a BA/BSc trip to Kenya and the BSc trip to the Amazon rainforest, which took place while we were in the USA. With second year trips to locations such as Spain and New York, the Geography Department at Leicester is undoubtedly a stimulating and exciting place to study, where learning is underpinned by real field experience. ■



Recent Graduate Success

Future employment potential is an increasing worry for many students. We are therefore pleased to report the career successes of our recent graduates. Jenny Cooper (BSc 2009) secured a position on the Anglian Water Graduate Management Trainee scheme before she had even graduated! One and a half years into her new job Jenny has kindly provided some insights into her new career. "The two year scheme involves all aspects of the company; from frontline water and wastewater operations to investment decisions ensuring the long-term sustainability of water supplies. The job differs with each placement and I have learnt about the company by shadowing

technicians, scientists and managers. My Geography degree has helped me with this job in many ways. For instance: knowledge of environmental conservation (working within SSSIs, treating sewerage and re-building habitats), water sustainability (encouraging careful water use, preventing losses), CO₂ emission reductions (new infrastructure decisions) and renewable energy strategies (methane production from sludge!). The varied and independent learning from my Geography course was directly applicable to this job and has given me a wide-ranging career opportunity, which also links with many personal interests from my studies". ■

All articles written by Geography Student ambassadors Emma Evans and Katie Ledingham

Big Green Week 2010

Big Green Week is a university wide initiative undertaken every year in October. The aim of the scheme is to encourage people to think green and to contribute to reducing the university's CO₂ emissions. As usual, geographers were heavily involved. Various activities including carbon footprint volunteering, seed planting and environmental awareness campaigns. One of the main attractions was a vigorous public debate on climate change, featuring our own Head of Department, Professor Heiko Balzter. Also participating were Roger Helmer (MEP for the East Midlands), Mark Warner (Sustainability Manager for Leeds Metropolitan University) and George Martin (Chairman of the Sustainable Development Foundation). We are pleased to say that when it came to the final voting Professor Balzter was victorious! In all, a fantastic and productive week!

Guest Speakers

Throughout the last year the department has hosted many internationally renowned speakers. Highlights this year included:

The Annual Geography Department Lecture in March featured Professor Julia Lee-Thorp from Oxford University. Julia gave a talk on the dramatic changes in Africa's climate during the last 8 million years, which saw the expansion of the savanna biome and the evolution of our own hominid

ancestors. Julia described her research into the chemistry of fossil bones and teeth recovered from this period. These chemical fingerprinting techniques give fascinating insights into past animal diets and reveal how some of our ancestors adapted their diets more than others as the African environment around them changed. It is likely that this was a vital step in the evolution of modern humans.



In October the department hosted the Royal Geographical Society regional meeting. The key speaker was Michael Palin (RGS President) who discussed his travel experiences while filming his many travel documentary series, such as "Pole to Pole". ■

Research News

The Leicester Geography Department is renowned for its excellent research. This extends to our final year undergraduate research projects. This year, third year student Sarah Chandler won both a University Scholarship and the Royal Geographical Society's prestigious Henrietta Hutton Award. These funded her research into fair trade practices and indigenous politics in northwest Argentina. Sarah's research considered the impact of fair trade on the Wichi people. Sarah explained:

'in my gap year I went to Argentina with a charity that I had been involved with since I was a child. I spent time alongside the Wichi People, who really challenged my preconceptions. They face tremendous problems over land rights and poverty. So, when coming to plan my third year dissertation project I knew I wanted to go back to Argentina.'

Other exciting research in the department includes Dr Mark Powell's and Dr Nick Tate's recent grant of £604,000 from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). The project focuses on the application of cutting

edge laser scanning techniques to study precisely how the flow of water affects sediment transport in rivers. It is anticipated that the research will significantly improve our understanding of sediment transport by flood waters and will be of great interest to hydrologists, engineers, and indeed anyone living or working near rivers. If you are interested in this, Mark teaches extensively on this subject in years two and three, while Nick's expertise in laser scanning and data analysis contributes to the department's "Geographical Information Systems" (GIS) research and teaching group. ■