



Environment and Society News

Newyddion Amgylchedd a Chymdeithas

Issue 1, March 2009

Message from the Head of School, Professor Marcus Doel

It gives me great pleasure to extend a warm greeting to prospective students of this School and University. Through this newsletter, we hope to share with you news of teaching and research-related activities in the School that will enrich your undergraduate or postgraduate studies with us in the new academic year. The School of the Environment and Society is a broadly-based and multi-disciplinary School, with more than 60 academic staff undertaking research in the fields of human and physical geography, biological sciences and development studies. We have vibrant undergraduate and postgraduate student communities in the school and we look forward to welcoming you to them in the new academic year.

Research in the news

Asylum seeking children living in Wales

The detention of asylum seeking children living in Wales is the focus of a special report on the BBC Politics Show http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/politics_show/default.stm on 8 March 2009. Dr Heaven Crawley, who has undertaken research on the impacts of detention on the mental and physical health of children for Save the Children, has been interviewed as part of the report. Other contributors include the UK Border Agency and the Welsh Refugee Council.

Otter Research

Dr Dan Forman will give a live interview on the *James and Louise Show* on **BBC Wales** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/> on 13 March. The interview will feature pre-recorded interviews with other otter workers but will focus on the otter research work being carried out at the School.

Dr Dan Forman's research was also highlighted on the BBC's *The One Show* - *Back from the Brink: Otters* on 26 January 2009. He appeared along with Mike Dilger and talked about their work on the trail of the elusive European Otter and the latest nocturnal Otter watching technology. The second part of the show on otters will be filmed in Swansea in September 2009.



CMPR involved in the Cities for the Local Integration of Migrants Project

The Centre for Migration Policy Research (CMPR) has recently joined a consortium of European research institutions involved in the Cities for the Local Integration of Migrants Project (CLIP). Dr Heaven Crawley and Tina Crimes from the Centre attended a two-day conference in Malmo, Sweden in December and will be undertaking research on policies for intercultural dialogue and relations between faith groups in Malmo, Dublin and Kirklees during February and March.

The Great Frost

Scientists in the School are leading a multidisciplinary consortium to investigate the natural variability of European climate over the last millennium. The aim is to use the climate of the past to improve predictions of the climate of the future. In light of the cold conditions during December and January, *New Scientist* journalists and the BBC radio programme 'Material World' marked the anniversary of the winter of 1709. Known as the Great Frost in England and Le Grand Hiver in France, the winter of 1709 was the coldest European winter of the past half-millennium, with large parts of Europe as much as 7°C below 20th century averages. For more information on other aspects of climate change, visit the Millennium project website: <http://137.44.8.181/millennium/>. A podcast of the Material World episode is available from the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/podcasts/material/>

The Bright Future of Algal Biotechnology

The Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture Research has been commissioned to develop an Algal Biotechnology Roadmap for Wales and organised a meeting on current and future business opportunities in the area on 28 January 2009 at the Village Hotel, Swansea. The purpose is to forge a network among Welsh businesses, academia and government to maximize economic benefit in this emerging, environmentally sustainable sector.

Grant to fund research on Coping and Livelihood Strategies by Failed Asylum Seekers

Dr Heaven Crawley and Professor Neil Price have secured grant funding from Oxfam Cymru and the Welsh Refugee Council for a study of coping and livelihood strategies by failed asylum seekers in the face of destitution. Fieldwork is being conducted in South Wales between January and April 2009. The main research method being employed is PEER (participatory ethnographic evaluation and research), a rapid qualitative methodology developed by Professor Price and Dr Kirstan Hawkins (a Swansea University Honorary Research Fellow).

Diabetes Research

The award of Dr Paula Row's new Diabetes UK Small Grant has been mentioned in "Research Matters",

<http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Documents/Research/Research%20Matters/issue%207/RM%20Winter%2008-09.pdf> the Diabetes UK online research magazine. Paula intends to study whether the small protein, ubiquitin, is involved in the breakdown of the insulin receptor, since people with type II Diabetes have abnormally low levels of the insulin receptor and ubiquitin is known to play a role in the breakdown of other receptors.

Current and projected demographic situation in Wales

Dr Heaven Crawley will be presenting an overview of the current and projected demographic situation in Wales to the Welsh Assembly Government's Environmental Agency Advisory Panel on 30th March.

Swansea Study highlights Wales as a stronghold for otters

Research in the School has highlighted the importance of Wales as a stronghold for otters in the UK, but has also raised questions about the methodology used to determine the national size and spread of otter populations. In the UK, otters are traditionally associated with freshwater habitats, with marine foraging thought to be restricted to Scotland. However, Gareth Parry, a member of the School's Conservation Ecology Research Team, has shown that Welsh otters also use the marine environment. Gareth Parry also gave a talk about his otter research at the Science Café <http://www.techniquet.org/scw/> on 28 January 2009. Gareth's research raised interest from BBC Wales <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7855745.stm> who also covered his talk.

Migration pamphlet launched at Houses of Parliament

The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) held an event hosted by the Parliamentary Migration Alliance at the Houses of Parliament on 16 December 2008 to launch their new pamphlet 'Migration to the UK: a simple guide' written by Dr Heaven Crawley. Dr Crawley spoke at the event and, together with the Immigration Minister Phil Woolas MP, responded to questions from an invited audience.

Jellyfish Project

The jellyfish project EcoJel got off to a flying start. Literally. Scientists circulated Cardigan Bay in a small aeroplane perusing jellyfish blooms. Once spotted, they approached them by boat and attached tiny dive computers. This information shows how jellyfish move up and down in the water column during the tidal cycle to avoid being washed out to sea, and the lifespan of each individual jellyfish we tag. You can get involved in this 1 million Euro EU project set to run until 2012: report your jellyfish sightings to the following web page http://www.turtle.ie/report_jellyfish.asp If you are lucky you will find a jellyfish dive computer on the beach and enjoy the £25 reward for returning it. Check our web page to see what to look out for: <http://www.swan.ac.uk/bs/turtle/ecojel.htm>

Training for Social Workers

Dr Heaven Crawley has been asked by the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership to provide training to social workers and other practitioners on the process of age assessment for age-disputed asylum seeking children. The training sessions, which are based on Dr Crawley's recently published research *When is a Child Not a Child: Asylum, Age Disputes and the Process of Age Assessment* (ILPA 2007), will be held in Cardiff and Wrexham during February 2009.

Swansea to develop aquaculture technology transfer with Thailand

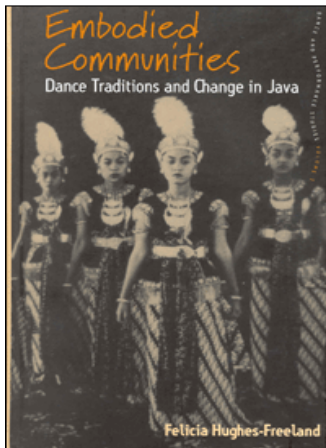


The Centre for Sustainable Aquaculture Research (CSAR) hosted a delegation of Thailand Department of Fisheries representatives from Rayong, Trat, Samutsakorn and Trang Provinces in December.

The visit, sponsored by the UK International Agri-Technology Centre (IATC), is part of an initiative to alleviate pressure from wild marine fish stocks in Thailand and other parts of S.E. Asia, where farming of prized grouper species relies on juveniles captured from the wild rather than reared in hatcheries. This practice is both damaging to marine fish stocks and prevents controlled development of the aquaculture sector due to unpredictable

supplies of juvenile fish from the wild. Welsh academic and industry partners have been selected to develop a technology transfer programme with Thailand, based on their expertise in aquaculture water quality management and class-leading research and production facilities. Discussions have focused on techniques for water quality control and hygiene management in marine hatcheries, based on the innovative recirculating aquaculture systems used in CSAR and at commercial marine fish farms located in North Wales. The delegation will also be visiting these commercial farms during their week-long stay in Wales. Professor Iwan Davies, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Internationalisation and External Affairs at Swansea University opened the meeting yesterday. He said: "I support the excellent work of CSAR in technology transfer on an international stage. This is a key element of our developing University internationalisation strategy".

Research on Performance Dance in Indonesia



Dr Felicia Hughes-Freeland has been researching performance dance in Indonesia since 1982. Her book, *Embodied Communities: dance traditions and change in Java* (Berghahn 2008), http://www.swan.ac.uk/news_centre/Releases/081215_dancetraditionsinJava/ follows two internationally renowned films and many academic publications about the transformation of Javanese court dance, based on original research and fieldwork between 1982 and 1999.

Public attitudes towards asylum and immigration

On 16 January Dr Heaven Crawley presented the findings of her research into public attitudes towards asylum and immigration at an event hosted by the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. The event, which was attended by more than 30 organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers, was intended to ensure that public information campaigns on asylum are evidence-based and informed by what is known about the factors that affect attitude formation and attitudinal change. The briefing paper is available online on the Royal Geographic Society's website:

<http://www.rgs.org/OurWork/Advocacy+and+Policy/Geography+policy/Policy+briefings.htm>

Staff in the news

BBC Wales Documentary on Climate Change

Dr Tim James and Dr Siwan Davies, Department of Geography, undertook some filming in Greenland with BBC Wales for a documentary on climate change which was shown on 2 December on S4C's *O Flaen dy Lygaid*. The documentary looks at what climate change means for Wales and those living in areas that could be affected by adverse weather conditions.

http://www.s4c.co.uk/clic/e_level2.shtml?programme_id=338038028

Students in the news

Inspired by Nature – Jellyfish and Polecats

Research student Owen Bidder, was joint winner with Dave Wright from Bangor of a competition for wildlife writing. Owen developed an interesting argument about Polecat awareness and identification. The competition was organised by **Natur Cymru**, <http://www.naturcymru.org.uk/> the quarterly journal which flies the flag for wildlife and the

environment in Wales. James Robertson, the editor, said: "We have many contributors to the magazine from people passionate about nature or who are working in some form of research or conservation. What we wanted to do through this competition was to make contact with and encourage the rich seam of young talent coming through the universities in Wales."

The £500 prize was funded by **WWF Cymru** <http://wales.wwf.org.uk/> and its director, Morgan Parry, said: "We are pleased to sponsor this competition which has helped to stimulate discussion and debate about topics of vital importance to Wales." Andrew Forgrave, Rural Affairs Editor for the Daily Post was one of the judges and commented: "The future of bio-science writing in Wales is in safe hands. Each of the finalists presented well-crafted articles that were based on sound research and fine writing." The winning articles will be published bilingually in the Spring and Summer editions of *Natur Cymru*. The prizes will be presented by Iolo Williams at an event to be hosted at Bangor University on 15 March.

Owen Bidder will be interviewed by **BBC Cymru** on Saturday 7 March on the Inspire by Nature prize. Owen will pick up the prize from Iolo Williams in Bangor on 15 March.

Fieldcourses

Fieldcourse to New York

31 undergraduate students and three staff from the Department of Geography will be off to New York City for a fieldclass during the last week of March. They will be examining the symbolic significance of spaces and buildings – including Wall Street, Ground Zero, Times Square and Central Park – as well as the ongoing process of gentrification in areas like the Meatpacking District, the East Village and Williamsburg, with their art galleries, loft apartments, and cafés. They will also be exploring the multi-ethnic history of New York in the Lower East Side and will have a chance to sample this cultural diversity as they travel to several of the outlying districts of Queens and Brooklyn.

Glaciology Course at Svalbard

Geography Research students will be going on a trip to Svalbard to attend the UNIS Glaciology Course which runs for four weeks from late February. The course includes lectures, laboratory work and field excursions. UNIS is the University Centre in Svalbard, a Norwegian research and teaching centre, located in Longyearbyen, at 78 degrees north. At this time of the year, the outside temperature is usually around -15 to -20 celsius.

Brownsea Island Conservation Society Trip 2008

It may be a surprise to some people that students actually do any work, but hand them each a saw and an island invaded by scrub, you could be surprised by the enthusiasm they show. In December, 2008 a group of seven students from Swansea University Conservation Society set out to Brownsea Island, situated in Poole Harbour, for one of the first residential trips that has been run in a long time.



Brownsea Island is most famously known for having one of the remaining few populations of Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), however there are conservation issues threatening their habitat; this includes overgrazing by Sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) and invasion of scrub, Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*).

Rhododendron clearance has been a long-term management strategy on the island, tackled by

large numbers of volunteers each year. Because the Wildlife Trust has a zero percent tolerance for Rhododendron on the island, efforts to remove it will continue until it has all been cleared. For this reason it seemed like an excellent project for the society to support.



From dusk till dawn Rhododendron was hacked down and chopped up to reveal a view that was previously masked by a screen of shrub. This work continued for two days, making a small dent in the time and effort required to completely remove all the scrub. Completion of this task and treatment of the re-growth could take a further 20+ years, highlighting the importance of volunteers and man-power. Of course the trip was not all work and no play, with cold, dark evenings drawing in fast it gave the opportunity to explore the island at night, although seeing little else other than the odd small herd of Sika.

Seeing this small island when summer crowds had long gone, allows a certain appreciation of the site and people who inhabit and protect Brownsea for future generations of willing students.

Written By Ellen Harpham (President, Swansea University Conservation Society 2008-09 and CERTS member, Conservation Ecology Research Team Swansea). Images, author's own.

Level Two Geography field course to Vancouver and SW British Columbia

34 level two geography students will visit Vancouver and SW British Columbia from 17-29 March, accompanied by Kevin Rees, Marcus Doel, Geraint Owen and Natascha Kljun. The students will follow either a human geography or a physical geography programme, with some combined activities. While in the region, the field course will visit and be assisted by the Mount Currie First Nations Band, the Geological Survey of Canada and University of British Columbia.

Annual Biosciences Project Seminar

The magnificent grounds of Sketty Hall provided the backdrop for this year's annual Biosciences project seminar event, held in January. More than 70 final year undergraduate project students from all the Biological Sciences degree schemes presented talks on subjects as diverse as raft spider conservation and the screening of novel antimicrobial molecules from insect larvae. The seminars represented the culmination of the students' research project modules in which they performed their own research under specialist guidance from academic staff. Communication skills are a critical aspect of our students' training and the staff were impressed by the maturity and clarity of the presentations. It is hoped that next year prizes will be awarded for the best talk from each degree scheme.

From Pole to Pole

Twenty-three years on since Dr Steve Alexander graduated from Swansea, the University leads the way in glaciology research, providing superb opportunities for postgraduate students to experience the Polar Regions first hand. Last February, six of the University's students swapped Wales for the Arctic island of Svalbard, where they undertook a month-long course in glaciology at the most northerly university in the world – the University Centre in Svalbard (UNIS) – to learn more about glaciology and the effects of climate change up close. At the same time, Glaciology postgraduate student in Geography, Benedict Reinardy, set off for Antarctica as part of a British Antarctic Survey scientific research exercise. The data he collected will enable scientists to understand the stability and climate sensitivity of ice sheets and allow better prediction of future sea level change. Benedict said: "Both my supervisors at Swansea and BAS have put a great deal of effort into getting me on the upcoming scientific cruise. I feel very fortunate as this is a very rare opportunity for a PhD student." The full article appears in the Swansea Alumni Association Newsletter. <http://www.swan.ac.uk/media/Media,23945,en.pdf>

Outreach activities

Brecon Beacons National Park audio trails

Geraint Owen and Siwan Davies have helped the Brecon Beacons National Park to develop interpretive audio trails for part of the spectacular waterfalls area at the head of the Vale of Neath. The aim is to help a new audience of ipod and mp3 users to understand the origins of the landscape around them and the physical processes responsible for the geology and scenery through audio trails and podcasts that can be downloaded from the National Park website and at the Waterfalls Centre at Pontneddfechan. English and Welsh versions of two trails have been produced and should be available shortly.

Geographical Association Lecture

The Geographical Association holds a regular series of lectures at Swansea. On 1 April Dr Heaven Crawley will be talking on migration issues. The lecture will be held in the Lecture Theatre in the Wallace Building.

Geographical Association Annual Quiz

The Geographical Association's Annual Quiz was due to be held in the Wallace Building on 4 February but had to be postponed to the evening of 11 March because of the snowy conditions. Ten schools from the Swansea-Llanelli-Neath-Port Talbot area are expected to bring 13 teams, amounting to about 50 GCSE Geography pupils. The School of the Environment and Society will provide refreshments and sponsor the prize for the winning team.

National Science and Engineering Week, 6-15 March 2009

On Monday 9 March, during National Science and Engineering Week, Geography staff will hold a workshop for Year 12 Geography pupils from local schools. Entitled "Global change: global threats", participants will investigate how global changes in the coming decades will affect the threat to society from a range of natural hazards. Working in groups, pupils will produce a press release and present a short news report. Their source material will include recent scientific literature, internet sources, and interviews with scientific experts from the Geography department. The event has attracted a lot of interest, and we are expecting 71 pupils to participate, drawn from 10 schools from Swansea, Gorseinon, Llanelli, Carmarthen, Porthcawl, Bridgend and Llantwit Major.

Welsh Schools' Climate Change Visit to University

A-level students from three Welsh schools (Ysgol Gyfun Gwyr, Ysgol Ystalyfera and Ysgol Bryn Tawe) visited the Geography Department in December to hear Dr Siwan Davies, Senior Lecturer in Geography speak about climate change issues.

http://www.swan.ac.uk/news_centre/LatestNews/Headline,29742,en.php

Swansea Science Café

The Swansea Science Café offers opportunities for anyone to find out more about new, exciting and topical areas of science. Designed to be informal and entertaining, the café typically runs on the last Wednesday of every month at the Dylan Thomas Centre. Entry is free and talks start at 7:30pm. For future events see <http://www.sciencecafewales.org/>

Conferences attended

In April 2009 Dr Krijn Peters, Centre for Development Studies, has been invited to attend a workshop on **Milita and Rebel Movements - Human Insecurity and State Crisis in Africa** organised by the Institute for Security Studies, South Africa.

Dr Nicola Piper, Centre for Migration Policy Research, Department of Geography, participated in the first GEMMA (gender and migration) workshop entitled **Enhancing policy through European Research in Gender and Migration** on 27 February in London (Middlesex University).

Dr Krijn Peters was invited to contribute to a one day workshop consultation on **Identity, Ideology and Child Soldiering: Community Mediation and Youth Participation in Civil Conflict** organised by the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit, Department of Politics, University of York, on 27 February 2009.

Dr Nicola Piper participated in the workshop entitled **From Mantra to Nexus in Migration and Development: The Transformation of Paradigms and Organisations** at the Department of Development Sociology, University of Bielefeld, Germany, 19 to 20 February 2009.

Amphibians and Reptiles - Opportunities and Obligations for Local Authorities Conference

Dr Dan Forman, Conservation Ecology Research Team, spoke at the **Amphibians and Reptiles** conference at the Towers Hotel, Jersey Marine, Swansea on 21 January 2009. The aims of the conferences were to raise awareness of amphibians and reptiles among Local Authority employees; to highlight legislative requirements and practical methods of good working techniques; and to investigate the requirements for the development of a guidance note. <http://www.arg-uk.org.uk/events.htm>

Dr Nicola Piper was invited to speak at the conference **International Migration and Human Trafficking**, organized by the Houses of Parliament in London, 3 to 6 February 2009.

Dr Charles Hipkin, Environment & Molecular Biosciences, was invited to give an opening lecture on **Urban Ecology** for the Recorder's Forum of the Glamorgan Biodiversity Advisory Group on 31 January 2009.

On 30 January 2009 Dr Nicola Piper participated in the first seminar on **Theoretical and philosophical challenges in framing the study of unfree labour** as part of the ESRC Seminar Series on 'Unfree Labour' at the University of Manchester, Politics Department, where she is member of the invited core group that is to meet six times over the course of the next 18 months.

In January, Dr Gerard Clarke, Centre for Development Studies, presented a paper entitled **Transfaith-Humanitarianism: Muslim Aid and United Methodist Committee on Relief** at the conference on 'Religion in the Public and Private Spheres: Implications for Development Policy' at the University of Birmingham. He also presented this paper during a workshop of researchers with the 'Religions and Development' research programme at the University of Birmingham as part of a project to produce a special issue of the journal *World Development*.

In December 2008, Dr Krijn Peters presented a paper at the conference **Youth Exclusion and Political Violence: Breaking the Link and Engaging Young People Positively in Development** hosted by the World Bank and the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway.

Dr Nicola Piper organized and presented a paper at the panel entitled **Women migrants and rights activism in Latin America and the Caribbean** at the *III Coloquio Internacional sobre Migracion y Desarrollo* (Third International Colloquium on Migration and Development), San Jose/Costa Rica, 3-5 December.

In December, Dr Gerard Clarke presented a paper entitled **Problematizing 'Civil Society': Insights from the Regulation of Civil Society in the Philippines** at the conference on 'The Future of Civil Society' organised by INTRAC (formerly the International NGO Training and Research Centre) at Amersfoort, in the Netherlands. He also presented this paper at a conference of the Network of Development Researchers held in Gregynog, in mid-Wales in January 2009.

For further details of any item reported above, please contact the member of staff concerned, or email the editor of this newsletter, Mrs Sandra Kramcha (s.kramcha@swansea.ac.uk).