



The
University
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Department
of
Geography.

Update...

Spring 2010

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Take a hike!
Walk this way for
a great welcome

Walk is a great welcome to Sheffield

A hugely successful new event organised by the Department of Geography as part of Intro Week invited new students to join staff and existing students on a six-mile walk from the centre of Sheffield to the Fox House Inn near Hathersage in the Peak District.

Every year we welcome hundreds of new students to Sheffield who, as part of 'Intro Week', enjoy an action-packed week of activities and events that help them make new friends and get to know the campus and city.

But how many, we thought, will discover what is arguably Sheffield's best feature: its closeness to the Peak District National Park? Will they even notice, we muttered, that you can walk there from the city centre in just a few hours?!

And so the Intro Week Welcome Walk was born, and on a warm and gloriously sunny afternoon in September 2009, we descended on Endcliffe Park in the heart of Sheffield's West End for the start of the inaugural walk.

Our ultimate destination had been chosen for many reasons, including the availability of food, refreshment, and cheap public transport to Sheffield. But there was also the advantage that, from Endcliffe Park, we could walk to the Fox House Inn via the leafy Porter Valley and along the stunning and rocky Burbage Edge without ever having to walk through a single suburb.

An hour into the walk we emerged from a thickly-wooded vale and stopped to look back

across the Porter Valley to Sheffield far beyond. Then, having walked a short distance across the beautiful heather upland of Burbage Moor, we reached Burbage Edge, and we stopped again to admire a stunning vista over the Peak District.

Burbage Edge is a gritstone scarp located high above the picturesque Burbage Valley. Walking

along the scarp in the sunshine on the last leg of the walk, many students commented on how great the walk had been, and how lucky we were to be able to offer this walk to our new students every year. And so that is what we intend to do. Just don't expect glorious sunshine every year!

For more information on Burbage visit:
www.peakdistrict-nationalpark.info/studyarea/factsheets/13.html



Burbage Valley and Burbage Edge

A proud year for GeogSoc

Geography Society committee receives prestigious invitation from the Royal Geographical Society

One of the largest and longest-established societies at Sheffield is enjoying a very successful year, writes GeogSoc President Hannah Rowe (Year 3 BSc Geography).

The Geography Society (or 'GeogSoc') is an undergraduate society whose committee organise an exciting programme of social events for Geography and Environmental Science students. The social events also help new students to make friends fast.

This year the committee is delighted to have received a prestigious invitation from the Royal Geographical Society to help organise a "how to run a Geography Society" event at the RGS headquarters in London. The event will encourage Universities who do not have a Geography Society to create one, and will offer them advice on how to do so.

The event recognises the benefits that a successful Geography Society can bring to a Department and its students, and the invitation is a clear indication of GeogSoc's reputation as one of the largest and most successful Geography Societies in the UK.

One of the reasons for GeogSoc's success is the variety of events on offer each year, ranging from a formal end-of-year ball, to charity quizzes and an annual weekend away to a top European city (this year GeogSoc are going to Paris). The Society also has some of the best sports teams in the Intramural League, including successful Hockey, Football and Netball teams.

The Society also has plans to introduce volunteering opportunities for its members that will help the wider community. The activities will be eligible for the prestigious Sheffield Graduate Award that recognises students who give time to good causes.



A GeogSoc event

RAE success

Department in the top 10 in the UK for research

The results of the UK Government's latest Research Assessment Exercise (RAE2008) - released shortly after the publication deadline for our Spring 2009 newsletter - have propelled Sheffield Geography firmly into the list of top 10 Geography Departments in the UK.

The RAE has been carried out roughly every six years since the 1980s. In the last RAE, we were probably 10th or 11th nationally. The latest RAE places us even higher, though our exact position depends on how the data from the RAE is used.

The most widely-reported measure places the Department equal 7th, alongside University College London, Kings College London, and the London School of Economics. However, based on the proportion of our research that is World-Class or Internationally-Excellent, we rank equal 2nd, alongside seven other institutions, including Oxford and Cambridge.

Head of Department Professor Grant Bigg stressed that research excellence contributes greatly to the quality of the student experience because the department's teaching benefits directly from the expertise of its staff.

Kibera film on test

Department holds test-screening of ground-breaking Kenyan feature film

Togetherness Supreme tells the story of the disputed Kenyan election of December 2007 and the violence that followed.

Filmed entirely on location in Nairobi's Kibera slum, the film is written by and stars the people of Kibera. Test screenings took place worldwide in 2009 and the film will be released in 2010.

The test-screening in Sheffield came about following a visit to Kibera by year-three students Amy Cosstick and Katherine Brown, who were in Kenya on the Development field class.



The film is being produced by the Hot Sun Foundation who are a non-profit organisation. As well as having provided opportunities for local people, it is hoped that *Togetherness Supreme* will raise awareness of the situation in Kibera that followed the election.

A top experience

Student experience survey places Sheffield firmly in the top 5 in the UK

The University of Sheffield has received national acclaim after being ranked 4th in a national student experience survey.

More than 10,000 students were surveyed for the 2010 Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey, which shows which universities offer the best all-round student experience.

The survey also ranked Sheffield top in the UK for its library and joint top (with Loughborough) for its Union of Students. The Union of Students also received national acclaim in 2009 after

being awarded best in the UK by the National Union of Students.

Alongside its packed weekly entertainment programme, Sheffield's Union offers support to students through its Student Advice Centre and the Student Job Shop helps students find work during term time. Students also benefit from a wide range of sporting facilities, including the S10 health fitness centre.

The University of Sheffield came 4th overall for the second year running, behind Loughborough, Cambridge and Oxford.

Emma wins prestigious internship

The Geographical Association (GA) and Department of Geography teamed-up in 2009 to invite Year 2 Geography and Environmental Science students to enter an essay-writing competition, with a prestigious internship at the GA's headquarters as the prize.

Emma Browning (BSc Geography) has become the first-ever recipient of the month-long annual internship after submitting an essay detailing her experiences as a volunteer in the village of Mkwiro on Wasini Island, Kenya.

The competition was open to all second-year students, who were invited to submit an essay responding to one of the themes in the GA's manifesto *A Different View*, which aims to stimulate the teaching of geography in schools.

Emma's essay described how, during her 14 weeks in the village, she worked with the Kenyan Wildlife Service and as a teaching assistant at the local community school (pictured right), and how the experience inspired her to apply to study BSc Geography as the first step towards a career in geography and the environment.

The GA, which has a close relationship with the Department, is both a charity and the national association for Geography Teachers. The core objective of the GA is to further the study, learning and teaching of geography in the UK.

The essays were judged on the basis that they should convey the excitement of a geographical perspective to lower-6th Geography students in such a way as to inspire them to continue to study Geography to A-level and beyond. The judging panel were unanimous in their decision to award the internship to Emma.

Emma will now begin her internship in June, where she will work to promote geography by contributing to the GA website, liaising with local teachers, and assisting the GA with activities, publications, and events. She will also gain valuable experience of working for an academic-related professional organisation.

Professor David Lambert, Chief Executive of the Geographical Association, commented: "The GA provides a varied and lively environment with a range of opportunities, all centred on supporting teachers and promoting geography in schools."

Asked about the quality of the essays, David replied: "I was taken by several aspects, notably the freshness of some of the writing and the way



reflections on personal experience were in many cases meshed with geographical concepts and perspectives." David is now hoping to be able to publish a selection of the essays in the GA's magazine *Teaching Geography*.

The internship competition is held annually. Emma receives a maintenance grant from the Department of Geography and a salary from the GA for the duration of the internship.

Cool honour

Dissertation is runner-up in national competition

Sally Tyldesley, who graduated in 2008, has received the honour of "runner-up" in a national dissertation competition organised by the Quaternary Research Association.

Sally simulated the flow velocity of the Antarctic ice sheet using balance-flux calculations. She then used the Horton-Strahler method of

stream classification to analyse the resulting network of fast-flowing ice streams.

One of the key strengths of Sally's dissertation, and one that the competition judges did not fail to notice, was the novel application of a classic method for the investigation of fluvial systems to a uniquely glacial problem. Well done Sally!

Research highlights 2009

Research goes down the pan in pursuit of record

Dr Rob Bryant, who is a leading expert in dryland environments, has been helping the Bloodhound SSC team locate sites at which to test their 1000 mph car prior to an attempt on the World Land Speed Record.

Drylands are ideal environments for the team as there are plenty of ephemeral lakes whose bottoms (termed 'pans' in southern Africa) are large, dry and very flat. Rob has also provided advice to the team on how to run the car with minimum impact to the environment. The team now hope to run the car at Hakskeen Pan, South Africa in 2011 (see www.bloodhoundssc.com).

Professor recognised for services to Geography

Professor Danny Dorling has received an award from the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) for geographical research that has made an outstanding contribution to social policy.

Professor Dorling was one of 17 people honoured, including climate change expert Lord Nicolas Stern, television presenter Neil Oliver, and natural history cinematographer Simon King. Danny was commended for his

work on issues of welfare, inequality and social justice, and his use of spatial analysis and creative cartography to analyse data and communicate it to a wide audience.

Danny also received a Gold Award at the 2009 Geographical Association conference for his publication 'The Atlas of the Real World' (Thames & Hudson 2008). The atlas, which he co-authored with Mark Newman (University of Michigan) and Anna Barford (also University of Sheffield), features maps from the WorldMapper project (see all the maps at www.worldmapper.org).

Expedition celebrated at special RGS event

A special evening of talks and displays was held at the Royal Geographical Headquarters in October 2009 to celebrate both the Department's very successful expedition to Svalbard in July 2009 and the long history of expeditions led by Geography staff to the High Arctic over the last 100 years.

The 2009 expedition, which visited western Spitsbergen to study changes in glacier extent, played a key role in the Department's centenary celebrations because the very first Head of Department had also visited Spitsbergen 100 years earlier. At that time, the Arctic environment was warming and under similar pressures to those of today.

Information for applicants

Open Days for applicants holding offers from UCAS

If you have applied to us via UCAS and have received an offer of a place on one of our degree courses, you should also have received an email or letter inviting you to visit us on an Offer-holder Open Day, where you can gain a fuller picture of student life and work at Sheffield.

To book onto an Open Day, follow the link given in the email or letter. If UCAS have notified you of an offer from us, but you have still to be invited to an Open Day, please let us know. The Open Days run from February to April in 2010.

Thinking of studying Geography at Sheffield?

If you are interested in studying Geography or any of our related degrees at the University of Sheffield and have not yet applied to UCAS, you can visit the University to find out more on any of the following Summer Open Days:

Saturday 19 June 2010
Thursday 1 July 2010
Friday 2 July 2010
Tuesday 7 September 2010

For further information, or to book onto a Summer Open Day, please visit:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/opendays/>

About the Department

The Department of Geography, founded in 1908, is one of the oldest departments of its kind in the country, and enjoys an international reputation for research in physical and human geography. To find out more, please visit:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/geography/>

About our degree courses

Degrees awarded by the University of Sheffield are highly valued and respected throughout the world and our Geography and Environmental Science degrees are widely-regarded as amongst the best of their kind in the UK.

To find out more about our degree programmes and view other essential information for prospective students, please visit:

<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/geography/prospectiveug/>

About your application

If you have applied to us through UCAS or are thinking of doing so and have a question you would like to ask, please contact us as follows:

Telephone: +44 (0) 114 222 7970

Email: geog-ug-applications@sheffield.ac.uk

Stop Press • Stop Press • Stop Press

2009 LR Moore Lecture

The Geography Department's 2009 LR Moore public lecture was given by Professor Iain Stewart who is well known for his BBC TV series *Earth: the Power of the Planet*, *Earth: The Climate Wars*, and *How Earth Made Us*. Iain's talk was entitled *Seismic Faults and Sacred Sanctuaries: cultural responses to earthquakes in Antiquity*.

Prizes awarded in 2009

Congratulations to the following students awarded prizes by the Department in 2009:

Hart Human Geography Prize: David Abrams (Level 1), Emma Chown (Level 1), Katherine Rogers (Level 2), Helen Ginnis (Level 3) **RS Waters Physical Geography Prize:** Nicola Dodd (Level 3); **Accenture Prize for Geography:** Nicola Dodd (Level 3 BSc Geog); **Laverick-Webster-Hewitt Travelling Fellowship:** Katherine Rogers (Level 2 BSc Geog); **Alice Garnett Dissertation Prize:** Natalie Whelan (Level 3 BSc Geog); **Hart Prize for best Extended Geographical Essay:** Helen Ginnis (Level 3 BA Geog); **Alice Garnett Prize for Dual**

Honours Geography: Joseph Mear (Level 2 Geog/Planning); **LR Moore Prize for best Geological field project:** Nicola Dodd (Level 3 BSc Geog); **Fearnside Prize for the best Geological field work report:** Richard Hayes (Level 3 BSc Geog).

Geography Student Cafe

A student cafe will soon be the latest addition to the Department courtesy of a £500,000 investment to improve the utilisation of space within the building. The cafe will be a place to meet for students who are working in the Department and will also provide a social space for smaller GeogSoc events. The remodelling work comes after a £1m redevelopment of the Department's physical geography and biogeochemistry facilities and a major refurbishment of the Geography undergraduate IT suite.

Summer Open Day winner

Congratulations to Claire Ruscoe who won our Summer Open Day prize draw. Claire wins two guidebooks to the Peak District and a Discovering Cities guide to Sheffield.