

A vested interest



What better way of going about seeking future employment than to organise for the employers to come to see you! The Southampton Student Chapter of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists has just organised its first Ocean and Earth Sciences Careers Day – and the event proved hugely popular with undergraduates, postgraduates and companies alike. In fact Exxon Mobil were

so impressed that they have offered to fund the organisation of future events organised by our Student Chapter! A multitude of students from all disciplines within the School were able to develop new contacts and ask questions of the industry representatives, as well as attend talks by some of companies in the afternoon. It looks like this Careers Day will become a regular event in future years...



Ocean and Earth Science



This newsletter is published by the School of Ocean and Earth Science at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton (NOCS)

The School offers undergraduate and post graduate training across the full range of Ocean and Earth sciences with an Excellent grading for teaching quality and a grade 5A in the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise.

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soes news

News from the
School of Ocean and Earth Science
at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton



Even hurricanes can't stop us!

In September 2006 eleven 4th year Master of Marine Biology students took part in the first ever SOES field course to Bermuda International Oceanography Station (BIOS, the new name for Bermuda Biological Station for Research). Travel plans were disrupted somewhat by hurricane Florence passing over the island on the day they were due to depart but with a lot of rescheduling the trip otherwise went ahead as planned. With excellent support from the staff at BIOS, our students were introduced to a variety of tropical environments (mangrove, seagrass and coral reef) and were able to snorkel on all of them. Perhaps the highlight of the trip was participating in a research trip on the RV Atlantic Explorer to work with BIOS scientists on a 2,500 m deep CTD profile and take oceanic plankton samples. The students each completed a 3-day independent research project involving a lot of snorkelling for samples as well as intensive lab work to analyse samples before departure. The trip provided a very thorough introduction to Tropical Marine Biology and was voted a substantial success by all involved.



Quite an IN-tro-DUCTION!

Adjusting to university life can be a somewhat daunting prospect for many of those starting their First Year of studies, what with moving into halls of residence, meeting new people and learning the ropes in your new department – but not so this year at the SOES! Having just completed our inaugural Induction Week, we hope our Freshers are now orientated and familiarized with the whys and wherefores of their courses and life at the National Oceanography Centre...

The week comprised such activities as basic First Aid training, a navigation exercise on Southampton Common, a Health and Safety training session and an introduction to scientific writing methods. During the two tutorial sessions students had informal meetings with their personal tutors and were set targets for their first week. Fieldwork exercises, blessed by glorious sunshine in the main, were much enjoyed: either a half-day session aboard our research vessel, Callista, or a 1-day expedition to map Lulworth Cove.

However, most felt that by far the most enjoyable component of the week was the half-day team-building session. This exercise was made possible as the majority of our staff members are now qualified as Teamwork Facilitators – including a large number who attended a course at the university sports ground in September.

So, during Induction Week we challenged small groups of students to work as teams in order to complete different timed exercises – and with names like Running Round in Circles and The Neutraliser (top left), you can perhaps visualise the mayhem that went on, cementing many new friendships. Student feedback indicates that the week certainly helped them to settle into university life, making many more new friends than people on other degree courses that they talked to in their halls of residence. Ed Hill, Director of NOCS, declared the inaugural Induction Week a great success whilst awarding prizes at Friday's closing ceremony.



Hands across the sea: new oceanography links with the US

Staff from SOES accompanied Bill Wakeham (the University's Vice-Chancellor) on a recent visit to the University of North Carolina, Wilmington (UNCW) in order to set up links between these two oceanographic institutions. In addition to fostering links at the research level, one of the main outcomes of this meeting was to initiate a formal exchange agreement between our centres at the undergraduate and

masters level. The agreement will allow us to offer students enrolled on our Oceanography with study in North America programme the opportunity to spend the US component of their degrees time at UNCW as an integral part of their degree course. This new opportunity to combine study in another US university will be an attractive option for potential students.



Investing in accommodation

Students have just moved into the newly refurbished Chancellors' Courts Halls of Residence following a £20 million project which doubled the number of rooms by adding a new floor and new wing to the building, which now offers diverse accommodation including en-suite and self-contained studio flats.

Student volunteers got to test the new facilities: one 'guinea pig' was the current



Students' Union President, and after living in Chancellors' Courts for two months, Ben Rogers said: "It's fantastic to see the University investing in such top-quality accommodation... I wish I'd had the option to live there when I was a first-year!"

Brazilian bushwhacking or Mongolian horse-racing, anyone?

This year saw us improve on even our UK-topping success rate in competitively won summer placements in the minerals exploration industry, and this year's destinations were even more exotic than in previous years... Rio Tinto flew Emily Morris to Mongolia, where not only did she experience field geology the Mongolian way, but also got to eat horse kebabs, watch traditional wrestling and take part in horse-racing across the Mongolian steppes!



Simon Oldfield in Brazil

Simon Oldfield was "bounced around makeshift runways in extremely small planes" working around Anglo's nickel laterite projects in Brazil, learning Portuguese from the locals on the way; in Western Australia, Susie Austen was entranced by wild kangaroos and slept in "dongas" whilst examining an enigmatic Anglo ore deposit north of Perth – and trying to understand Australian Football League rules!

Turkey was the destination for James Edwards and Rob Thorne: Stratex International taught James gold exploration techniques in the Konya region, whilst Rob travelled the country with Rio, examining Cu-porphry systems. Perhaps the 'high'-light of the summer was Pete Woolley's 6-week placement on the Tibetan plateau being "given the same independence as... a consultant geologist" working at several 1000 metres altitude on Cu-Mo-Au deposits. Not a bad way to spend the summer vacation, rolling work experience, project work and exotic foreign travel into one – invaluable experience when this bunch look for jobs...



Pete Woolley in Tibet

We know what they did last summer: from Greenland to...Lowestoft?

The different ways in which work experience is combined with research projects undertaken as part of our degrees was typified by three students this summer: Simon Johnson, a Master of Geology, who travelled to Greenland to collect samples from inside the Arctic Circle, Esther Fung (Master of Geophysics), who secured a Shell summer placement in Aberdeen, and Shaun Villa (Marine Biology with Oceanography) who gained work experience at CEFAS (Centre for the Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science) at Lowestoft.

Simon flew by Twin Otter to East Greenland where they sailed some 300km in Zodiacs, navigating fjords for a 5-week expedition which saw him scaling mountains to record climate cycles preserved in 270 million year old desert sediments which are potential hydrocarbon reservoir rocks. Simon tells us his most enduring memory will be seeing a polar bear from a distance of 4m:

fortunately he was securely inside the hut in which they were staying, as the bear took a bite-sized chunk out of a spare sleeping mat they'd left outside!



Made it! Simon Johnson on top of the world having logged his way up through a succession of Permian sediments on a mountain in East Greenland.

Esther spent 10 weeks in Aberdeen experiencing first hand the operations of a major multinational oil company: how different research departments interact and the various roles they play in exploration and production. Whilst there, she was able to examine cores drilled from a North Sea oilfield, material which she will be using for ground-breaking analyses back at Southampton as part of her Final Year Research Project.

Shaun's project is funded by CEFAS and, in a first for the English Channel, will examine fish otolith (ear bone) chemistry in an attempt to identify and differentiate between nursery grounds of species contributing to commercial fish stocks: the hope is that this work will have applications in the management of fishery quotas.