

Departmental News Letters

Newsletter: July 2008, No. 178

Staff and Students

We are sad to have to announce the untimely and sudden death of **Prof John Thornes** (1940-2008), Head of Department from 1981-5, during the challenging period of the merger between Royal Holloway and Bedford colleges. He collapsed during a field trip to the South Shropshire hills on Thursday 17th July, and died shortly thereafter. He is survived by his wife, Rosemary and children, Christopher and Clare.

John was a distinguished geomorphologist and hillslope hydrologist and brought with him well established research and field work interests in hydrology, water resource management and a special regional concern for arid south-eastern Spain. Not surprisingly this area became a main focus of departmental field work activity, a tradition still carried on by Don Thompson, and providing so many students with unforgettable experiences.

At the end of his headship in 1985, John left for a Chair at Bristol and then to King's College where he played a prominent role in many capacities and was also one of the architects of the merger between the Royal Geographical Society and the IBG. John was an inspirational researcher, a greatly respected supervisor and colleague and he had a fine sense of humour and fun and had no time for academic and managerial pomposity. He recovered remarkably from a severe stroke some years ago and was able to resume most aspects of his career. David Hilling represented the Department at his funeral.

Welcome to **Alice Christie**, our new Departmental Administrator. Alice was the administrative assistant in the Department of English at Royal Holloway and has a degree in Natural Sciences from Cambridge. Alice started on the 7th of July.

David Simon was interviewed live on one of South Africa's main radio stations, SAfm, on the Moneywise with MWeb programme on Friday 11th July 2008, about the implications of climate change for coastal property owners in South Africa.

David Simon was interviewed, with Roger Harding, on BBC World Service radio's The World Today (0011-0015 BST, Mon 2 June) about the domestic and international significance of President Mugabe's arrival in Rome for the UN Food Summit at the FAO. David also recorded a separate interview with Max Pearson.

Elaine Turton assumed her new role as Departmental Superintendant on Monday, 21st July.

Gill Adourian left the Department on 31st July. Gill acted as an interim Departmental Administrator since summer 2007.

Welcome to **Lisa Howell**, a Sixth Form student and Nuffield Science Bursary holder, who will be working with Mary Dengler and Danielle Schreve until 22 August on their project about using large herbivores to manage landscapes in the EU (which is funded by the RGS-IBG).

Outside Engagements

Tim Unwin chaired an open meeting on “Students, scholarships and the Commonwealth: breaking ties, wasting talent’ held at the Royal Commonwealth Society on 10th July at which the keynote speakers were Germaine Greer, Sir George Bain and Alastair Niven.

Tim Unwin was on the Programme Committee of the Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held at the Institute of Education from 14th-17th July, during which he chaired the theme keynote session on Access to Learning for Development.

Felix Driver has been invited to extend his term as a member of the AHRC Peer Review College until December 2012.

Duncan McGregor convened and chaired the Award of Honours Meeting of the London External Degrees Board of Examiners in Geography, at Stewart House on 25 July 2008.

David Simon attended a Chatham House discussion meeting with the new Kenyan Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, at the Houses of Parliament on 22 July.

Tim Cresswell gave a plenary address to the 50th annual meeting of the Institute of Australian Geographers in Hobart, Tasmania on 2 July 2008. His address was entitled “Dromologies: Towards a Politics of Mobility”.

Tim Cresswell gave the opening keynote address to the biannual meeting of the Association of Australian Geographers in Melbourne on 7 July 2008. The theme of the conference was “Locating History” and his talk was entitled “Locating History in Maxwell Street, Chicago”. His talk was recorded for the Australian Broadcasting Company.

Charles Howie attended the annual conference of the Association of South East Asian Studies Association of the United Kingdom (ASEASUK) at Liverpool John Moores University in June 2008. At the ‘emerging scholars’ panel he gave a paper entitled ‘Farmer decision making in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam: work in progress’. To his intense and pleasant surprise the next student to speak gave a paper on how farmers in the Mekong Delta were managing the challenges posed by Vietnam’s recent admission to the World Trade Organisation. This was the first time he had met a student studying the same subject area as his.

Peter French acted as UoL examiner at Queen Mary for a PhD thesis entitled ‘An investigation of the spatial distribution and partitioning of metals in estuarine sediments.’

Rupert Housley presented a paper entitled ‘New chronological evidence from the Middle Palaeolithic site of Kabazi II (western Crimea, Ukraine): geoarchaeological implications’ at the 6th World Archaeology Congress (WAC-6) in University College Dublin, 30 June - 2 July.

Ed Derbyshire attended a meeting of the Intergovernmental/International Science programme Chairs’ Working Group of the UK National Commission for UNESCO, held in Whitehall on 4 July.

Publications

Simon, David (2008), 'The Chago Islanders long wait for Justice', *Guardian Newspaper*.

Felix Driver, 'Geography and vision: Denis Cosgrove, 1948-2008, *Environment and Planning A* 40 (8), 1779-1782

Grants and Awards

Hugh Crosfield won 1st Prize for the 2007 Women and Geography SG award for his undergraduate dissertation entitled 'How was femininity constructed and performed in the 1938 Glasgow exhibition?'

Alex Loftus has been awarded £7,500 from the British Academy for a conference and networking project on Gramscian Geographies.

Felix Driver has been awarded nearly £169k over 15 months from the AHRC for a project on Hidden Histories of Exploration: Exhibiting Geographical Collections.

Claudio Minca has won £399k over 3 years from the ESRC for his project, Re-branding the Levant: Contested Heritage and Colonial Modernities in Amman and Damascus. Jessica Jacobs will be his RA for the duration of the project.

Russ Spyker, Msc Sustainability and Management, was awarded the Irene Marshall Travel Award of £500 for his study in Fiji, titled 'The impacts of tourism on coastal communities in the Coral Coast region of Fiji'.

Fieldwork-Conferences-Overseas

Varyl Thorndycraft was an invited participant representing LUCIFS (Land-use and Climate Impacts on Fluvial Systems) at the PAGES Past Human-Climate-Ecological Interactions (PHAROS) Workshop (7-8th July, Royal Society London). The main aims of the workshop were to discuss the draft PHAROS Science and Implementation Plan and produce position papers on the synthesis of palaeodata within the three scientific communities represented at the meeting (LUCIFS, LIMPACS and HITE).

Campbell, D, D Barker and **D McGregor** (2008) 'Dealing with Drought: small farmers and environmental hazards in southern St Elizabeth, Jamaica', presented by D Campbell at Foundations and Directions: celebrating Geography and Geology at The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Jamaica, 7-11 July 2008 (UWI 60th anniversary celebrations).

Luiza Bialasiewicz, Klaus Dodds, Claudio Minca, Al Pinkerton and **Rory Rowan** all presented papers at the Second Global International Studies Conference in Ljubljana (Slovenia) between 23-25 July.

Rupert Housley undertook fieldwork involving the taking of samples for volcanic tephra on the Late-glacial archaeological site of Ahrenshöft in Nordfriesland Germany, 13-16 July.

Ed Derbyshire visited the Secretariat of the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) on 2 July to make a preliminary assessment of the UK National Committee's records of activity in recent years.

Visitors/meetings in the department

Professor David Barker (Geography and Geology, University of the West Indies) visited **Duncan McGregor** between 24 and 31 July, to take forward their joint research and publications into the effects of environmental change on Caribbean agriculture and food security. They also met with Dr David Dodman (IIED) to discuss this and other related research activities.

Any Other News

Klaus and Carolyn Dodds became proud parents of Amelia on the 7th of July, a sister to Alex. Amelia weighed in at 8lb and 9oz and mother and daughter are doing well.

