



# ABER *News*

## Record number of Aber graduates getting good jobs

There was good news about employability in the lead up to Graduation.

Latest figures show that 95.4% of all the UK and EU students who graduated from Aberystwyth University in 2016 were either in work or further study six months after graduating.

The results, released at the end of June as part of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) annual Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey, places Aberystwyth ahead of the overall sector average.

HESA's figures are based on students who completed a full time first degree in 2016.

The data also shows that 75.6% of those that were in employment or further study were in professional level jobs or graduate level further study.

Eleven departments out-performed the sector average for numbers entering work or further study, with Art, Education, Law and Welsh seeing 100% of their 2016 graduates in work or further study six months after completing their

course, with Computer Science at 98.5%.

The results reflect the University's ongoing focus and commitment to preparing our students for the workplace.

This commitment does not stop when our students graduate, with assistance from the University's Careers Service continuing after graduation, with many services being offered remotely, including one-to-one careers consultations, application/CV checking, and access to the graduate vacancies database.

Graduates seeking to turn business ideas into reality can access a full programme of enterprise events organised by the University's Careers Service under the AberPreneurs banner, which includes the popular InvEnterPrize student ideas competition.

And, for those seeking advice from further afield, the exciting eMentoring online platform allows current students and young graduates to receive career mentoring and guidance from Aber alumni.

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## Wild about flowers

The wildflower bank in front of Hugh Owen Building has drawn a great deal of attention and positive feedback from students, staff and visitors. *Aber News* spoke to Paul Evans, Grounds Manager in the Estates Department, about where the idea came from, and what the process of planting the bank involved.



### What gave you the idea for the wildflower bank?

We were having issues with the shrubs along the main drive on Penglais Campus encroaching onto the path and preventing the lights on the wall of the Hugh Owen building from lighting the path at night.

The Estates Department was undergoing a project to replace external lighting with new energy efficient LED lights, so the decision was made to remove the shrubs at the bottom of the bank to take away the need to continuously trim the area back, and to install new street lighting.

We had already planted seventeen wildflower areas on Penglais Campus and decided to do the same in this area, as once it was planted it would only need cutting once a year in the autumn.

As this is one of the most prominent areas of the campus we decided to use wildflower turf, which we had not used before, because it would grow quickly and be more reliable than sowing seed.

At about the same time, I went to a University Horticultural Officers Conference where there was a Dutch bulbs firm advertising the different mixes that they had. The mixes that appealed to me were the successional flowering mixes that had different bulbs flowering at different times, providing continuous colour and interest for three or four months.

So, we made the decision to underplant the turf with bulbs, combining the benefits of the early flowering spring bulbs with the later flowering wild flowers.





**What did the process of preparing the ground and planting the flowering banks involve?**

After clearing the shrubs, we had the roots dug out by a digger which loosened the soil at the same time.

One of the Grounds staff then threw the first bucketful of the 30,000 bulbs on to the bank, but to his dismay all but two of the bulbs rolled down onto the path!

We looked at each other and said "this is going to be a long job", but with a different technique and a bit of perseverance we made good progress.

The digger then placed a thin layer of soil over the bulbs and a week later we laid the wildflower turf over the top. We left a narrow strip at the bottom of the bank which we laid with ordinary grass turf, so that this could be mowed shorter next to the path.

We then watered it and, with the help of some autumn showers, that was it!

**What are the benefits of the flowering banks?**

Among the many benefits this project has added is biodiversity. It provides early nectar for pollinators (many of which are in decline) from the six different varieties of early spring bulbs, and later the 35 native wildflowers and 15 non-native perennial flowers keep the season going until late autumn.

It also saves on labour costs, is environmentally friendly and provides a long season of colour and interest.

**What has been the response from visitors to campus?**

The feedback from staff, students and visitors has been fantastic, with compliments, emails and people constantly taking photos. I don't think a day has gone by without someone remarking on it.

It has far surpassed how I was expecting it to turn out, especially in the beginning of the year when it was changing colour on almost a weekly basis.

Because it is in such a prominent location, the way it has turned out has been a relief, as well as being rewarding!

**The Vice-Chancellor's Column**



In my first column for Aber News, I talked about how leaders are often judged by their first 100 days in office. I crossed that particular Rubicon on 11 July and have learnt a lot in my short time as Vice-Chancellor at Aberystwyth University. One of the things I have enjoyed most since arriving in this very special part of the world

is meeting students and staff, and finding out more about some of the fascinating research being carried out by our academic community.

Let me give you a brief taster from my visits around the Institutes: I've seen the slopes of Pwllpeiran where the crops we grow are offering sustainable solutions to farmers worldwide facing drought, flooding and other challenges. I've heard about our fascinating collaborative plans to integrate literary heritage and geomorphology in medieval and early modern Wales. I've watched a model of the ExoMars rover being driven across a scale version of the surface of the Red Planet in our Physical Sciences building.

What has also impressed me has been the quality of our teaching spaces across the University but more importantly perhaps, the excellence of our teaching. The recent Teaching and Learning Conference for staff was a showcase for some of the leading edge techniques pioneered by our lecturers to inspire the curious and creative in our students. Using Lego, for example, to explain complex concepts in computer science or virtual reality to enrich our students' classroom experience.

In the past few months, I have become a regular visitor to the Arts Centre's theatre, cinema and Great Hall. I have even had the unexpected privilege of playing in an orchestra of well-known Welsh musicians (Catrin Finch and Shân Cothi among them). I should hastily point out that my contribution came in the form of tapping a tambourine. With the obvious exception of my playing, it was an evening that highlighted the exceptional talent we have locally, the versatility of the Arts Centre, and the close relationship between town and gown.

There is no doubt that our University has many strengths but there are areas where we need to build on current achievements and work together to make this historic institution even more resourceful and resilient. We all know there are challenges ahead and we will move forward in methodical careful steps, with excellence our constant watchword. We can use Dartlet's analysis and recommendations to better identify what makes us distinctive and what draws people to us. We can also use the coming months to forge our new Strategic Plan for the next five years leading to our 150th anniversary.

I look forward to sharing my first Graduation Week with you and to my next 100 Days in this inspiring University.

**Professor Elizabeth Treasure**



## Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd appointed University Chancellor

The Right Honourable Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd has been appointed the next Chancellor of the University.

Lord Thomas will take up the position in January 2018 and succeeds the current

Chancellor Sir Emyr Jones Parry who steps down in December 2017 after serving a full ten years.

Lord Thomas is currently Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, and President of the Courts of England and Wales, but will retire from the judiciary on 1 October 2017.

He was made an Honorary Fellow of Aberystwyth University in 2002 and is a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales.

The honorary role of Chancellor centres on ambassadorial and ceremonial duties, including presiding over the University's annual graduation ceremonies.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry currently holds the role of Chancellor and the Chair of Council at Aberystwyth University. These two positions are now being split and a separate process has begun to recruit a new Chair of Council to start in January 2018.

## The Interwoven Relationship of Law and Media

Postgraduate researchers from Aberystwyth Law School were joined by researchers from as far afield as Edinburgh University at their postgraduate conference, *The Interwoven Relationship of Law and Media*, in March.

Presentations by postgraduates covered subjects such as property law and the media; the Pendleton witches; child offenders in the media; international self-defence and a discussion on how Lili Elbe (*The Danish Girl*) would be treated under today's law.

Guest presentations included a presentation on *Fake News* by Dr Uta Kohl from Aberystwyth Law School, which sparked debate and discussions on the use of the internet for news and how dissemination of information has changed; and a presentation entitled *The Sense of Justice* by Dr Stefan Machura from Bangor University,



which focused on how distributive and procedural justice are portrayed in films.

Aberystwyth Law School Postgraduate Conference is a student-led endeavour which aims to enhance research, learning and discussion as well as to provide networking opportunities in a friendly and supportive environment.

## Walters Kundert Fellowship

Congratulations to Dr Arwyn Edwards, Lecturer in Biological Sciences at IBERS, on being awarded the Walters Kundert Fellowship for 2017 by the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers).

The Walters Kundert programme of grants was launched at the beginning of 2017. The Walters Kundert Fellowship and three Walters Kundert Grants for postgraduates are awarded annually.

The Fellowship provides £10,000 to support field research in physical geography within Arctic and/or high mountain environments, with preference to field studies that advance the understanding of environmental change past or present.

Arwyn described receiving the Fellowship as a "remarkable honour".



Credit: Dr Anne Jungblut, Natural History Museum

# 40 years on, the Hugh Owen Library gets a makeover

The Department of Information Services is currently carrying out a major refurbishment of Level D (the ground floor) of the Hugh Owen Library on Penglais Campus.

Feedback from students has highlighted the need to maximise, update and improve appropriate study spaces in the library, and Information Services has worked with architects, DarntonB3, to develop a refurbishment scheme that meets these needs.

The refurbishment will see the layout of Level D altered in order to improve user access to facilities and services. It will involve:

- Relocating the entrance to face the Arts Centre piazza



Hugh Owen Library in 1976, when reservations and lending services were on Level E.



A selection of the finishes, colours and patterns that the new Level D will be furnished with.

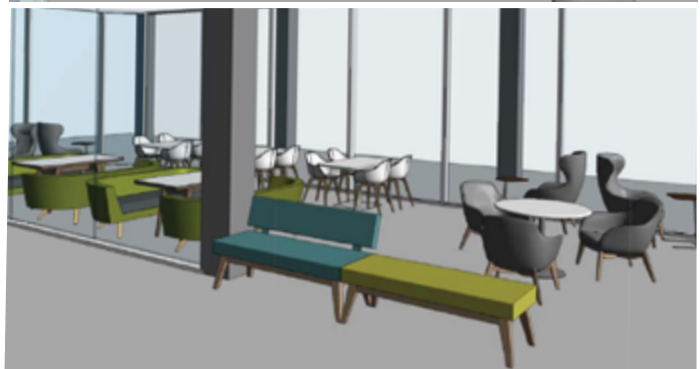
- Relocating the enquiry desk
- Creating two new group study rooms
- Creating a vending area
- Creating more study and computing space
- Installing better lighting, heating and ventilation
- Installing gender neutral toilets



Finally, the décor will be updated and new furniture installed which will better meet the needs of the modern day user.

Whilst works are ongoing, Level D services have been relocated to Level E, ensuring that services to users are maintained and disruption kept to a minimum. The new look Level D will be unveiled in January 2018.

In the meantime, to keep up to date with the refurbishment visit the blog: <http://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/librefurb/>



Credit: Bridgend Office Furniture

## Spotlight on... the Graduation Team

Graduation is when we celebrate the achievements and successes of our students. It is a very busy, but also exhilarating and rewarding time for the Graduation Team, who work hard in the lead up to Graduation Week, and are on-hand throughout the week to make sure that the ceremonies run as smoothly as possible.

Aber News spoke to the Graduation Team about just what is involved in organising the highlight event in the University calendar.

### Who's in the team?

The Graduation Team includes staff from across the University. The majority of the planning in the run up to the week is carried out by staff in the VC's Office, Academic Quality and Records Office, Arts Centre, Campus and Commercial Services, Theatre Film and Television Studies, Communications Team and Design and Print.

During Graduation week itself, volunteers from all over the University (from both academic and professional service departments) get involved and don the purple Graduation Team t-shirt.

### What does the work involve in the lead up to Graduation Week?

It's like arranging a four day wedding! Planning the ceremony, receptions, parking, flowers, speeches, tickets, seating plans and much more...!



### Describe a typical day during Graduation Week

It's busy! The Graduation Team start setting up from about 8am for on-the-day registration and opening the reception desk. Students are keen and they get there early so we're usually ready to go with smiles and safety pins from early on.

Then there's seat checking in rehearsals and ceremonies, marshalling, interviews with Honorary Fellows and students.

We also spend a lot of time directing and signposting and generally checking everyone ends up in the right place at the right time and enjoys the day.

There's a rota though so we don't all do everything every day!

### What are the highs?

Graduation is such a happy occasion. It's great to see all the excited graduating students with their friends and families celebrating their achievements - there's nothing quite like it!

### What are the lows?

Inevitably there are a few hiccups along the way - things that don't quite go to plan or problems arise that we didn't anticipate. It can be stressful occasionally, but it does add to the sense of achievement once the problem is solved.

### How do you feel by the end of Graduation Week?

Tired but exhilarated. We take a few months to recover and then start planning for the next year!





## Order of Ceremonies for Graduation 2017

Tuesday 18 July 2017	
<b>CEREMONY 1: 11.00am</b> Art Education English and Creative Writing	<b>CEREMONY 2: 3.00pm</b> Business Modern Languages Welsh and Celtic Studies
Wednesday 19 July 2017	
<b>CEREMONY 3: 11.00am</b> Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences Theatre Film and Television Studies	<b>CEREMONY 4: 3.00pm</b> Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences
Thursday 20 July 2017	
<b>CEREMONY 5: 11.00am</b> Information Studies Law	<b>CEREMONY 6: 3.00pm</b> Computer Science Mathematics Physics
Friday 21 July 2017	
<b>CEREMONY 7: 11.00am</b> Geography and Earth Sciences Psychology	<b>CEREMONY 8: 3.00pm</b> History and Welsh History International Politics

### Posthumous degrees

A posthumous degree is being awarded to Emily Price, a final year BSc Mathematics & Physics student who died suddenly in May this year after a short illness. Emily was a wonderful ambassador with a talent for communicating science to young people and encouraging them to study the subjects she cared about so much. Her family is involved in discussions with the University about setting up a bursary in her memory.

Caitríona Lucas is being awarded a posthumous BSc degree in Information and Library Studies by distance learning. Caitríona died on 12 September 2016 whilst in the performance of her duties as a volunteer with the Doolin Coastguard in Ireland and tributes were paid to her courage and selflessness by the Irish Government and in the national media.

Andrew Fleming is a member of the Property Services and Grounds Maintenance Team in the Estates Department, where he carries out a wide range of horticultural tasks associated with keeping the University campuses looking at their best.

## In addition to the day job



However, in addition to the day job, Andrew is an accomplished lawn bowler, who has competed internationally and won a number of tournaments and titles.

### **Tell us a bit about lawn bowling**

Lawn bowling is usually played outdoors on a bowling green. The idea is that you roll bowls down the green to try to get them to stop as close as possible to a smaller white ball called a "jack".

It sounds easy, but the bowls are not quite round – they are shaved on one side which gives them a bias and causes them to change direction as they roll.

When all the bowls have been played, a competitor or team gets a point for each of their bowls that is closer to the jack than the opponent's closest bowl.

There are a number of variations of bowls – lawn, crown green, short mat, indoor and outdoor, and also para bowls and bowls for the visually impaired.

Bowling is played in most Commonwealth countries and is expanding into other areas, such as Turkey, The Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland.

### **When and why did you first get interested in bowling?**

My father already played bowls, so I went along with him and just picked it up from there. I was lucky that five or six of my friends started at the same time. I've been playing for about thirty years now.

### **What is it that you enjoy about bowling?**

I like getting to meet different people and having the opportunity to play (and beat) some of the world's best players.

I'm also very lucky to have seen the world whilst playing bowls – I have represented Wales at World Bowls in Australia, and at events in New Zealand, America, Hong Kong, and Israel. Dr Simon Payne, who is a Lecturer in Sport Science and Human Health Psychology here at the University, has helped me with the performance psychology and nutritional side of the game, helping me prepare for demands of international sport in different countries.

I play for Clwb Bowlio Machynlleth Bowling Club which is quite a family-orientated club, and a lot of my friends and family play so there's quite a nice social side to it as well. I enjoy playing as a part of a team, and feel I am better suited to this than chasing personal glory – this is also the case with my work at the University. After all, TEAM = Together Everyone Achieves More.

In the summer months I play about six times a week, so bowling certainly keeps me occupied! I don't have much time for anything else other than work and bowls and working in my garden.



**What have been the low points?**

Losing!

**What have been the high points?**

A real high point for me was competing in the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010.

Also, winning Welsh and British titles with team mates from Clwb Bowlio Machynlleth Bowling Club in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

From the time that I first represented Wales, I have been living the dream. It is everyone's ambition to represent your country at your chosen sport or profession. If I walked away from the sport tomorrow I would have no complaints.

**What's on the horizon for you?**

I'm in the Welsh Elite Squad of twelve players. I have also been selected for the Welsh International Team for 2017, and will captain the Wales Team when they play in Belfast later this year. The last time anyone from Montgomeryshire was made Captain was in 1931, so this is a great honour not just for me, but for my club, for Machynlleth and for the county.

**What would you say to somebody who wanted to get into bowling?**

I'd just say try it out - it's not as easy as it looks!

When I started it was an old man's game, now it's almost gone full circle and I'm now the older man! In the present team I am the fourth oldest - when I joined I was the fourth youngest.

I am a qualified coach and hold coaching sessions at my local club to encourage people, young and old, to try bowls. I began this two years ago and it has proved successful. I would not have been able to achieve the success I have had without the help of my team mates, and I feel coaching gives something back to my club for their support in the past.

There are several teams in the area - for example, two in Aberystwyth, one in Tregaron, and one in Aberaeron. If anybody is interested, I would be happy to put them in touch with the local team.

Why not give it a go?



aberworks.aber.ac.uk

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During term-time if work is available, you may choose to work up to 15 hours per week, with more hours possible during vacation periods.

Salary will be dependent on the casual role you undertake. Work could be based on any of the University's campuses including the Old College. You have the choice of accepting work that fits around your schedule.

To register for the **AberWorks** Scheme, please visit: [aberworks.aber.ac.uk](http://aberworks.aber.ac.uk)



**Aber Works – a case study**

Christopher Corish is studying for a degree in Fine Art. He works for Hospitality Services at Tamed Da, a role he obtained through the Aber Works scheme:

"My experience of the Aber Works scheme was good. I was really surprised at how quickly it all happened - one day Ta Med invited me in to speak to them, and the next day I was doing a trial shift.

"I think I have learnt to manage my time better - I've actually got more academic work done since working at Ta Med Da because I've got less time to procrastinate.

"It's been an interesting learning curve. I have learnt lots, and met lots of people. I've also learnt how to work with different people because different people have different ways of doing things, and have different attitudes towards life."



## Health and well-being research at the University



**Dr Rhys Thatcher, Reader in Exercise Physiology in IBERS, reports on the launch of a new research unit which is the focal point for health and well-being research at the University:**

Many of the health challenges which today's society is facing are associated with the ageing population and the increase in the

prevalence of chronic medical conditions. Each week there are local and national news stories related to the increase in diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cognitive problems, and the increased demand that these place on the health and social care services.

Research over many years has shown clear benefits of lifestyle interventions for many of these health issues. This research has informed recommendations on food and alcohol intake, and physical activity levels, but in Wales we still have only one in three adults consuming five or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day, and only one in four meeting the minimum recommended daily amount of physical activity (Welsh Health Survey, 2015).

So that we can better understand how to translate the dietary and physical activity guidelines into real change within the general population, the University has launched the Well-being and health Assessment Research Unit (WARU).

Located in the Carwyn James Building on Penglais Campus, WARU facilitates health and well-being related research within the University by fostering relationships with members of the local community and by providing a physical space in which to meet members of the public enabling them to engage

in the research process. Visits by WARU to Morrisons, the Welsh Government offices and Tesco have enabled the local community to get health assessments including measurement of body composition, blood pressure, and strength and balance. They have also had the opportunity for feedback and advice on healthy lifestyles.

In addition to working with the public, WARU also works closely with the University's Centre for Excellence in Rural Health Research and a number of external organisations, including Hywel Dda University Health Board, North Ceredigion GP Cluster, Parkinson's UK and Age Cymru.

The Unit is current engaged in two European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) funded projects:

The first, 'FrAilty Care and wEll-funcTion' (FACET) is led by Dr Marco Arkesteijn, and focuses on the prevention of frailty. Frailty increases the risk and impact of adverse events and makes individuals more vulnerable to quick and sudden declines in functional ability (the ability to perform activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, shopping and housework).

The FACET project aims to increase the awareness of frailty amongst individuals and professionals and what people can do to prevent frailty. It also aims to help older adults to monitor and improve their functional ability, health and well-being.

As part of this project, eighty older adults have already received a 'functional fitness and health' MOT. There will be a free online

course on healthy ageing and from July this year (2017) will be looking to recruit people to the project.

The second project, 'Monitoring Health and Well-being in the Home' (MWH@home), aims to assess the use of 'smart' digital technology to help individuals monitor, and potentially improve, their nutrition, body composition and general well-being.

Recent research in IBERS has shown that the chemicals derived from food can be found in urine and measurement of these can be used to accurately assess diet. WARU is now using this technology to monitor individual's diets in the community.

A key aim of the MWH@home project is to determine whether providing objective measurement of diet via urine analysis in conjunction with self-quantified diet diaries can help individuals to understand their true eating habits, and with this information encourage behaviour change and help promote a healthier lifestyle.

Participants in this project will be provided with a set of 'smart' weighing scales and tape measures which link to a tablet-computer (provided by the project) to help estimate body condition in the home.

Over the course of a year the participants will visit WARU three times to undergo a comprehensive series of tests to assess their well-being and health and get feedback on their urine tests.

Led by Professor John Draper, the project aims to contribute towards combating the UK increase in obesity and chronic health conditions often linked to diet, such as type 2 diabetes and coronary diseases.

Through working with local people WARU aims to better understand how we can engage people in healthier lifestyles through health eating and being physically active, thus directly contributing towards future practical solutions that help reduce the burden of chronic disease and hospital admissions in the UK.

Further information on current studies can be found on the WARU website and we also have an active Facebook page and Twitter account. If you're interested in taking part in our projects, or being kept up to date on upcoming events, you can also contact us via [WARU@aber.ac.uk](mailto:WARU@aber.ac.uk).

## AberSU Column

# New roles and new faces

By the time this article is printed we will have welcomed in a new team of officers to AberSU and they will be settling into their new roles.



I thought this *Aber News* article would be the perfect place to introduce the new full time officer team as well as their new roles...

### **Union Development Officer: Bruce Wight**

Bruce is originally from Loughborough and studied Mathematics.

This year, Bruce will focus on making the Union better for the future and making sure the student voice is heard.

### **Academic Affairs Officer: Emma Beenham**

Emma, who is originally from Torquay in Devon, studied Physical Geography.

Her role focuses on promoting our students' academic interests.

### **Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President: Gwion Llwyd Williams**

Gwion from Penygroes near Caernarfon studied History and Welsh History.

This role focuses on promoting Welsh culture, giving Aber students the opportunity to learn, speak and live the language.

### **Student Opportunities Officer: Jessica Williams**

Jessica studied Drama, Theatre and Film and Television. She is originally from Caerphilly in south Wales.

Her role focuses on giving Aber students the best student journey possible and giving them more than just a degree.

### **Wellbeing Officer: Molly-Jean Longden**

Molly-Jean studied Drama and Theatre Studies and is originally from Manchester.

This role focuses on making sure our students are as happy and healthy as possible.

These aren't the only 'new things' here at AberSU. By A-level results day in August we will also have launched a refreshed website too! Watch this space.

Pop over to [www.abersu.co.uk](http://www.abersu.co.uk) for more news.

**Eleri Wyn**  
AberSU Marketing and Communications Manager



Left to right: New AberSU officers: Molly-Jean Longden (Wellbeing Officer), Bruce Wight (Union Development Officer), Gwion Llwyd Williams (Welsh Culture Officer and UMCA President), Emma Beenham (Academic Affairs Officer) and Jessica Williams (Student Opportunities Officer)

# Digital Skills Training programme wins accolade

The University's innovative Digital Skills Training programme was recently awarded runner-up in the Equality and Diversity category at the annual UK Universities Human Resources (UHR) Awards.



The awards recognise university Human Resources initiatives that address significant issues in an imaginative and effective way.

The Digital Skills Training programme at Aberystwyth University was aimed at staff who wanted to improve their digital skills. It covered the use of Excel, Word and other software, as well as a digital literacy guide to social media platforms.

The programme was supported by the Human Resources (HR) Department, trade unions UNISON and UNITE, TUC Cymru and the Workers Educational Association (WEA) Cymru.

Susan Chambers, Director of Human Resources, said: "This has been a truly inspirational programme aimed at ensuring equality of access to digital technology, and thus wider resources and opportunities. It has been useful for employees across the University, particularly those in Campus and Commercial Services and the Estates Department who may not use IT regularly as part of their daily work."

Huw Jones is livestock movement recorder for the Farms Office



Huw Jones receiving his Digital Skills certificate from Professor John Grattan

in IBERS, and previously worked for the Centre for Research into Environment and Health in the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences: "I felt the course was really beneficial. I haven't had much experience of working with computers but I could do the basics, and the few things I knew how to do, I could do well. However, I lacked confidence in myself, and on my first day on the course I wondered what I had

let myself in for. But, as with everything else in life the more you do, the more confident you get and the happier you are in doing it."

Olga Kittle, a cleaner in the Parry Williams Building, was encouraged to do the Digital Skills Training by her line manager: "I'd never touched a computer before, so it was all new to me. I didn't have a computer at home so I was coming in at 5.30am to use a computer in Hugh Owen Library to practice the things I had learnt for half an hour before I started work. I love travelling and now I can use the internet to find out about the places I'd like to visit."

In recognition of her exceptional commitment, Olga was presented with a decommissioned computer by the University.

Human Resources Business Partner, Lesley Spees, commented: "Olga was one of a number of staff at the university who work in a job role that has not in the past included the use of computers, but who are increasingly expected to operate within

a technological framework and to provide services to our customers for whom the digital world is the norm.

"Olga has achieved such a lot through her own efforts and determination to develop her digital skills and confidence, and providing her with a computer to use in her own home to practice what she has learnt at the digital skills training, was a satisfying moment for all of us.

"We're proud of this work because it has enabled staff such as Olga to develop her computer literacy skills."



Olga Kittle being presented with a decommissioned computer by the University. L to R: Lesley Spees, Susan Chambers, Olga Kittle and Tom Bates (Head of Campus Life)

The Human Resources Department is keen to hear from members of staff who would like to explore a specific area of digital skills, or expand their knowledge of particular software. Please contact Lesley Spees (les24) to discuss.



Lesley Spees (centre) and Sue Chambers second from left) from Aberystwyth University's Human Resources team receive recognition for the good work done on digital skills training at the annual UK Universities Human Resources (UHR) Awards.

## International Office update

The International Office has had a very busy year, supporting activities that enhance the international student experience and promote a diverse and dynamic study environment.

We were extremely pleased that Aberystwyth University was awarded second place for the 'International' category in this year's WhatUni awards, and will continue to develop opportunities where international and home students study, live and socialise alongside each other in a culturally diverse environment.

Here are some of the things that we have done in the last year...

In 2016 we welcomed 141 students and family members from Birmingham airport using Meet and Greet, where we help them onto coaches, transport them to their accommodation and help them with their luggage. Tickets for Meet and Greet 2017 are now on sale and we hope to replicate our success this year.

In January 2017 we celebrated Chinese New Year with a very successful event led by the Chinese Student Society.



In March 2017 we hosted our annual One World Week. As part of this week many successful events were held including: Malaysian Evening, Gala Evening, World Fair and two debate evenings.

Over 200 students took part in One World Week. We would like to thank all of our students who participated and made the week such a success. We would also like to thank the Aber Fund which provided funds to allow students and societies to run stalls for the World Fair.

We have continued to offer our popular social programme and have taken a total of 253 students on trips around Wales this year, including visits to Cardiff, The Senedd, Portmeirion and Harlech Castle.

We have also collaborated with colleagues in Tamed Da, who have hosted eleven international dinners.

This summer, we are launching our new Global Ambassador scheme which we hope will provide students with an additional support system and further improve their experience in Aberystwyth.

We continue to develop the International Student Experience programme and would encourage staff to provide feedback on the current activities, or ideas for new initiatives. Please email [international@aber.ac.uk](mailto:international@aber.ac.uk).

**Lisa Fisher**  
International Assistant





# My research

*Aber News* is shining a spotlight on the work of some of our early career researchers. In the second in our series of features, Dr Fergus Oakes, Research Fellow in the Department of History and Welsh History tells us about his research.



Originally from Morpeth in Northumberland, Fergus spent ten years at the University of Glasgow, where he acquired an MA in History, an MLitt in History, and a PhD in Medieval History. He joined Aberystwyth University in January 2016.

**Describe your research in a nutshell?**

I am a Research Fellow on the Imprint Project, which is a major Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project run jointly between Aberystwyth University and the University of Lincoln, working with the project's Co-Investigator, Dr Elizabeth New.

Imprint is the first project of its kind, merging cutting-edge forensic techniques with traditional historical investigation to analyse the fingerprints and palm prints found on the back of wax seals, leading to new discoveries about social constructs and legal practices of the time (1150-1350), as well as providing data which will help current identity science experts.

During the creation of a medieval seal, the prints of the person making the seal often became imbedded in the warm wax, which then hardened as it cooled, retaining the impression of the prints.

A key component of the project has been using a hi-tech piece of equipment called the Crime Lite Imager. This is a multi-spectrum imaging device used by the police and other law-enforcement agencies to view and image fingerprints from crime scenes. We use it to capture images of the prints on the wax seals for the team's fingerprint analyst to study.

My PhD research was on the nature of war and its impact on society during

English civil war of 1264-1267 (known as the Barons' War), so, while a 13<sup>th</sup> century specialist, my background in sigillography (the study of wax seals) was relatively limited.

Now, together with my Lincoln based colleague, I can say that I am one of only two Forensic Sigillographers in the world!

**What's a typical day for you?**

This varies. For the first year of the project I was engaged in the main data gathering phase, which meant in most instances spending four weeks at each of our partner archives around the country. These were the National Library of Wales, Hereford Cathedral Archives, Exeter Cathedral Library, Westminster Abbey Muniments and the Lincolnshire Records Office.

During those times I spent my days imaging the backs of the seals, photographing the documents and databasing the contents.

Since we finished the main data gathering, my focus has been on the comparatively more mundane medievalist task of dating the documents and helping to populate the project's website.

**What do you find most rewarding?**

The project has involved a real range of different experiences and challenges. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect has been the chance to work with so many fascinating and precious medieval documents in some very memorable locations.

There have been some particular highlights: at Exeter we were allowed to use the Crime Lite Imager on both the

10<sup>th</sup> century Exeter Book (a UNESCO listed work) and the Exon Domesday, which were great privileges.

In Westminster Abbey I was working in the medieval muniments room from where you can look down on Poet's Corner and the choir. The room itself is complete with a beautiful 14<sup>th</sup> century tiled floor and timber muniment chests, which have not been moved since they were installed in the Abbey after it was rebuilt by Henry III in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Coupled with getting to hear the choristers and organist rehearsing, it created a rather memorable atmosphere in which to work.

**What do you find most challenging?**

Spending such long periods away from home presented some challenges, but thankfully my wife and I are used to using Skype.

Life as a postdoctoral researcher also involves moving from task to task regularly. While very rewarding in many ways, it does make it quite hard to establish routines and the peripatetic nature of the role for the first year has meant that sometimes I can feel a rather transient figure in the department.

Further information about the Imprint Project:

- Twitter: [@Imprint\\_Project](#)
- Facebook: [ImprintProjectseals](#)
- Blog: [imprintproject.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/](http://imprintproject.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/)

If you're a PDRA and would like to share your research with a wider audience, please e-mail [communications@aber.ac.uk](mailto:communications@aber.ac.uk)

## Focus on... Gender Equality

Whilst the University's Diversity and Equality Team is in the process of preparing the institution's application to renew its Athena Swan Chartermark, Ruth Fowler, Communications and Equalities Officer in the Human Resources Department, has been asking three members of staff about gender ratio imbalance and why it is important we are aware of it:



**Kath Williams**  
Institute Manager  
Institute of Arts and  
Humanities

"I think having a diverse staff population is important in itself, it's not just a matter of gaming with statistics.

This University has a long and proud tradition - we've been here for a long time; but we still need to be mindful, and to balance that with being a progressive and modern organisation. An awareness of gender ratio imbalance and how it is manifested across the spectrum of roles is important, and we should take seriously our responsibility to address that imbalance.

"Even though it sounds like a long time, it's less than fifty years since the Equal Pay Act. It's extraordinary to think that it's less than fifty years since we needed an act of parliament to determine that work by women should be valued and remunerated at the same level as that of their male counterparts. However, there is still a glass ceiling. Males out-earn their female counterparts and we need to be very aware of that as an on-going issue.

"I started nearly 20 years ago in a University that was very male dominated. Like many institutions, it was led by men and the vast majority of Heads, both of Academic and Professional Departments, were male. However, I've watched a gradual change into something different. From my own perspective, seven of the nine departments in the Institute I work in have a female in charge.

"I believe there's always room for improvement and we need to be aware of becoming complacent. However, we have an HR policy in place, we're represented at senior level by both men and women and we recently welcomed our second female Vice-Chancellor. I think we should take some pride in that."

**Christine Zarges**  
Lecturer  
Department of Computer Science

"Gender ratio imbalance is a really important issue in computer science. Across the sector as a whole, as most people probably know, there are, in general, significantly fewer female students and female members of staff.

"There is already a lot going on at Aberystwyth University to redress this. There are many more female staff in Computer Science at Aberystwyth than there were in the last university I worked in, and it is important that this is visible externally as it may encourage female students. In April, the University hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> BCSWomen Lovelace Colloquium. Started by Dr Hannah Dee, who is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science, the Lovelace Colloquium has grown into the UK's leading computing conference dedicated to encouraging more female students to enter the world of computing and IT.

"There are a number of other initiatives aimed at making computer science more appealing to women, as computing is an area where there are a lot of jobs and the sector is currently missing out on many skills that women could bring.

"Computer science is a field with a significant breadth, and there is a need to ensure that women are aware of all of the different specialisms within the subject, as well as the potential crossover with other subjects, like biology and medical sciences. Schools need to play their part in encouraging girls to take GCSE/A-levels in computing too."



**Steve Walsh**  
Head of Data  
Analysis and  
Reporting,  
Planning and  
Governance  
Department

"With a purely cynical hat on, it is important that the University is aware of gender differences, because it is absolutely key for student recruitment. Female students are at least as numerous as male students, and it would be foolhardy not to be thinking about all genders in order to ensure our recruitment messages are suitably targeted.

"On a statistical basis, this is the first year ever that we have recruited more women than men. While this in itself is worth celebrating, we have many years of less well-balanced recruitment to make up for.

"Across our academic departments there are several examples where undergraduate recruitment has meant that either men or women are very much under represented. Sorting out those differences and, for example, making computer science as appealing to women as it is to men, or making education as appealing to men as it is to women, would be great steps forward for society.

"We live in a culture that's waking up to gender issues, but there are still inbuilt societal biases that need countering. If we don't give equal weighting and consideration to all genders, then we're not living in a society that treats us all as we would wish to be treated, and makes the best use of everybody's talents."

## Appointments

### DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

**Otar Akanyeti** has recently joined the department as a Lecturer. Otar received his PhD in robotics, and worked as a postdoctoral researcher at Whitney Institute of Marine Biology in University of Florida. His research interests include bio-inspired sensing and navigation in aquatic environments.



### OBITUARIES

#### Dr Bernard Delagneau

Originally from France, Dr Delagneau was appointed Lecturer in Marketing in the Department of Agricultural Economics in 1971, a position he held for 28 years until his retirement in 1999.

#### Rosemary Law (1939-2017)

Originally from Northern Ireland, Rosemary came to Aberystwyth in 1964, and worked as a part-time secretary in the Department of Sociology, before moving to the Computer Science Department. She held the post of Administrative Officer in Computer Science from 1990 until her retirement in 2001. She, along with her husband David, served as a warden of Plynlimon and Caerleon Halls from 1986-88, where her sympathy and common sense in dealing with students' problems proved immensely valuable. Rosemary was for many years an active member of NALGO and its successor UNISON, and was a longstanding and enthusiastic member of the University Women's Club.

#### Jacob Thomas Pugh (1938-2017)

Jacob was formerly a porter in Llandinam and Llanbadarn.

#### Professor David Wulstan (1937-2017)

Professor David Wulstan was Emeritus Professor of Music and Honorary Professor in the Department of Modern Languages at Aberystwyth University, and Honorary Fellow of St Peter's College Oxford. Having studied music at Magdalen College, Oxford, he was Professor of Music at University College Cork, before being appointed to the Gregynog Chair of Music at Aberystwyth University in October 1983. As a scholar, he edited and reconstructed numerous works by Tudor composers, and published extensively in the field, including two full length books. He also composed for film and television.

### SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

**Professor Paul Brewer** has been appointed Head of Geography and Earth Sciences. He is currently Professor of Physical Geography and first joined the Department in 1993. He takes up the role on 1 September.



**Dr David Ceri Jones** has been appointed Head of History and Welsh History. David is currently a Reader in the Department and is an early modern historian. He takes up the role from 1 August for one year whilst Professor Martyn Powell is on research leave.

**Dr Susan Busby** has been appointed Academic Campus Director at our Mauritius branch campus. Susan joined AUM in September 2016 as a Lecturer in Business and Management, and is also Business Theme Lead in Mauritius.



**Professor Neil Glasser**, Director of the Institute of Geography, History, Politics & Psychology (IGHPP) has been reappointed for a further four years.

**Professor Qiang Shen**, Director of the Institute of Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science (IMPACS) has also been reappointed for a further four years.



### STAFF REMEMBERED

A memorial tree-planting ceremony was held at Plas Gogerddan Mansion gardens on Friday 26 May to remember Dr Sandra Pierre, a well-respected colleague and friend in IBERS. The sun shone as an oak tree was planted in memory of Sandra, and those who wished to said a few words. The fitting and touching tribute was followed by a bring-and-share lunch.

Another well-known and much missed member of IBERS staff, Dr John Corton from the BEACON team, was remembered at a memorial service held in the Old Hall, Old College on Saturday 3 June. An evening event was also held in honour of John at Y Consti Restaurant on Constitution Hill, where friends and colleagues shared music, readings and memories of him.

Colleagues from IBERS also signed books of condolence for John and Sandra.





## Staff and student fundraising

### Opportunities for young people in Rio de Janeiro



The Psychology Society, one of the University's student societies, has been raising money for a sport for development charity in Brazil.

The charity, UMRio, supports 300 young people in the Morro do Castro favela, which is heavily affected by crime and violence.

UMRio attempts to use rugby as a tool for positive youth development, psychologically and physically, while at the same time providing them with a safe space and enabling environment, where they can access and forge new opportunities to learn, develop and pursue aspirations, and build confidence in their own identities.

Videos relating to the project's work are available here: <http://umrio.org/index.php/videos/>

The Psychology Society raised £85 by organising a pub quiz in the Student Union.

The charity is linked to an ongoing programme of research by Dr Gareth Hall, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, who has been investigating how mega-events, sports and physical activity, and rugby in particular, have contributed to facilitating social change, as well as positive psychological development by participating in sports-based interventions of youth development.

### HR raises funds for new polytunnel

Fourteen members of Human Resources staff undertook a nine-week sponsored healthy eating challenge earlier in the year.

As well as collectively losing 83lbs, the team raised £370 which joined a £300 donation from the National Union of Students to purchase a polytunnel for the Penglais Community Garden.



Left to right: Martyn Saycell, Susan Chambers, Sara Jones, Ruth Fowler, Jean Glennie, Bob McIntyre.

### Student Support Services Dance for Life



Left to right: Barbara Jones, Sarah Thomas, Janet Roland, Nicky Cashman, (Nicky's husband James), and Diane Jones.

Staff from Student Support Services raised over £800 for Cancer Research by taking part in Peter Kay's Dance for Life 2017 in Coventry in March.

### Careers Service Race for Life

Staff from the University's Careers Service raised almost £1,000 for Cancer Research taking part in the Aberystwyth Race for Life in May.



Left to right: Christina Evans, Lorraine Spencer, Anna McAdam, Jacqui Ho, Joanne Hiatt, Eloise Hiatt, and in front baby lolo.

## School of Art Exhibitions

The School of Art Gallery is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. Admission is free.

### At the Margins, 7 August - 1 September 2017

International Print Exchange between Print Council Aotearoa New Zealand and Aberystwyth Printmakers Wales

Printmakers reflect on the way the "marginal" positions of the British and New Zealand archipelagos have influenced the representation of culture, society, remembered histories and landscape and how this has changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Faith Flower (Wales), *Marginal Adjustments 2*, etching



Julia Ellery (New Zealand), *Hei Tiki Lookout*, mezzotint

### Postgraduate Exhibition, 18-28 September 2017



Jess Raby, *Video still of Marwolaeth Babi Melyn (Death of Yellow Poppy)*

## Aberystwyth Arts Centre until 2 September



Terence Wilde, *Embodiments*

### Radical Craft

The exhibition showcases artworks by historically renowned artists associated with Outsider Art, and contemporary self-taught artists who see themselves as facing barriers to the art world for reasons including health, disability, social circumstance or isolation; 21 of whom have been selected from open submissions.

According to textile artist and Professor of Textile Arts at Manchester School of Art, Alice Kettle, the exhibition "communicates the dynamic of living and making, of using transformative potential of craft to enter other visionary worlds...craft becomes a process of resistance and method of adaptation".

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