



Photo credit: Mick McGrath

# ABER *News*

## AberSU Teaching Awards 2017

The annual Aberystwyth Students' Union Teaching Awards took place at the Great Hall, Aberystwyth Arts Centre on Friday 5 May. More than 400 nominations were received for the fourteen awards, which recognise staff and academic representatives in a range of settings across the University. The winners of the AberSU Teaching Awards 2017 were:

**Leading Equality Award**  
 Ruth Fowler (Human Resources)

**Next Step Award**  
 Alison Pierse (Lifelong Learning)

**Innovative Teaching Award**  
 Jukka Kiukas (Department of Mathematics)

**Postgraduate Teacher of the Year**  
 Alexandros Koutsoukis (Department of International Politics)

**Supervisor of the Year (Postgraduate)**  
 Lucy Taylor (Department of International Politics)

**Supervisor of the Year (Undergraduate)**  
 Jim Provan (Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences)

**Election Heroes Award**  
 Department of Welsh and Celtic Studies

**Academic Representative of the Year**  
 Philip Perry (School of Education)

**Support / Service Staff Member of the Year**  
 Helen Stockley-Jones (Sports Centre / Department of Geography and Earth Sciences)

**Outstanding Feedback Award**  
 Ian Harris (Aberystwyth Business School)

**Personal Tutor of the Year**  
 Kim Kenobi (Department of Mathematics)

**Welsh Language Champion**  
 Arddun Arwyn (Department of History and Welsh History)

**Lecturer of the Year**  
 Mark Whitehead (Department of Geography and Earth Sciences)

**Department of the Year**  
 Department of Physics

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## New developments in teaching and learning

Six projects have received a share of £25,000 funding from this year's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fund.

The projects all aim to enhance learning and teaching and have a positive impact on the student learning experience.

This year's successful projects will explore learning mindsets and video headsets, accessible DNA sequencing and concept-mapping, capturing business expertise and capturing what our researchers are up to.

The six funded projects are:

**ABER: Mindset, Ambition, Potential, Self-regulation** will look at how we can create growth mindsets in student learning and is being led by Basil Wolf, Joanne Hamilton and Simon Payne from IBERS - £9,811.

**Evaluating the use of immersive technology to aid the delivery of science-based education in IBERS** will use 360° video cameras to create virtual learning experiences. The contacts are Daniel Low and Simon Payne from IBERS - £4,974.



**What's So Great About My Research?** will employ student interviewers to capture Aberystwyth researchers telling us about their research. The contacts are Graham Lewis and Dafydd Roberts from CDSAP and RB&I - £3,600.

**Raising awareness of Neurodiversity with AU staff through Inspiration** will promote the use of concept-mapping as a learning tool. The contacts are John Harrington, Janet Roland and Caroline White from Student Support Services - £4,142.

**BLUF: Bringing portable, user-friendly DNA sequencing devices to the classroom** brings cutting-edge portable gene sequencing to the hands of undergraduate students. The contacts are Dr Arwyn Edwards and Dr Amanda Clare from IBERS/Dept of Computer Sciences - £4,392.

**Interviews with Experts: Business Examples Brought to Life** will build a collection of video resources, by interviewing business leaders from across the UK. The contacts are Tim Gillison and Dr Sophie Bennett from Aberystwyth Business School - £1,711.



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## The Vice-Chancellor's Column

As I write, the newspapers are full not only of the election campaign in Wales and the UK but also President Trump's first 100 days in power. It has of course become something of a tradition to judge a new leader at the end of what's often seen as this 'honeymoon' period in office.

I've only been in post as your Vice-Chancellor for around 45 days and I hope you're not rushing too quickly to pass judgement. The past few weeks since I joined on 3 April have been busy to say the least. Thank you for your generous and warm welcome. I've been trying to meet as many staff as possible, by visiting Institutes and Professional Service Departments as well as holding a series of Q&A sessions on all three campuses. May I thank everyone who came along to those meetings and, for those who couldn't attend, there will be other opportunities in the coming months. I have also said – and this is a genuine offer – that you are welcome to email [vcstaff@aber.ac.uk](mailto:vcstaff@aber.ac.uk) at any time and I will respond.

The issues that came up at each and every one of these staff meetings were very similar. One of the things I said quite openly at all four gatherings was that we were in the middle of a particularly challenging budget round. At the time of writing this column, we are still heavily involved in discussions about our financial situation and the best way of ensuring that our University is placed on a sustainable footing for the future. There are difficult days ahead not only for us but the sector in general as we seek to balance our budgets and adapt to the challenges and changes of today's intensely competitive higher education environment.



Alongside these pressing discussions (which as they are ongoing I will keep you updated by email or web), we also need to look to the longer-term. Our five-year strategic plan comes to an end in December and we need to have a new one in place by January 2018. I want to make sure that every member of staff is given an opportunity to be part of the development of this plan, along with students and the wider community. The Dartlet workshops and focus groups with students and staff will inform this process but I am also keen to hear your ideas for innovative ways of gathering opinions and making sure the voice of staff is heard loud and clear.

This next strategic plan will take us beyond our 150th anniversary. We reach that milestone in 2022 and by then, I hope that the difficult decisions we are having to consider now in 2017 will be behind us. As your VC, my intention in coming here is not to carry out wholesale restructure. What I need to do though is make the necessary changes to ensure Aber is still here in another 150 years as a respected teaching and research-intensive University offering an exceptional student experience whilst serving its community, Wales and the world.

**Professor Elizabeth Treasure**  
Vice-Chancellor



## Fellows of Learned Society of Wales

Six members of Aberystwyth University were elected Fellows of The Learned Society of Wales on 27 April:

- Professor Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor
- Professor Iwan Morus, Professor of History at the Department of History and Welsh History
- Professor Michael Woods, Professor of Human Geography and Transformative Social Sciences at the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences
- Professor Peter Barry, Emeritus Professor at the Department of English and Creative Writing
- Professor Howard Williams, Emeritus Professor at the Department of International Politics
- Professor Richard Rathbone, Honorary Professor at the Department of History and Welsh History

## Marketing Aber

An ambitious recruitment and marketing strategy is being developed for the University, spearheaded by a team which includes Director of Finance Daniel Benham, Head of Collaborative Provision Sue Moss, Head of Psychology Professor Nigel Holt and marketing consultant Bob Kerwin. Daniel Benham describes the aims and objectives of the team, and outlines the crucial role played by members of staff.

Anyone who has worked in higher education for years will know that every now and again the sector goes through a sea change.

We are currently living through a period that will probably be seen as a watershed for the sector with increasingly intense competition between universities for students, who are now their principle source of revenue.

It was against this changing backdrop that a small team was set up at the end of last year to design and develop a best in class marketing and recruitment provision at Aberystwyth University.

As part of the team's activities, a decision was made to seek help from leading experts in the field of education marketing.

The company appointed after a procurement process was market leaders Dartlet. Their work will help the University to better understand *who* Aberystwyth University is, with a view of how best to position the University in the Welsh, UK and global markets.

This positioning work is the fundamental platform on which marketing work is built.

Interactive workshops and focus groups, along with an online survey, have been developed for us by Dartlet. Their findings

will be presented and discussed with council in June before being rolled out across the University as a whole including a series of two-hour sessions on Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 June.

Alongside this activity, the team, working with professional marketing consultant Bob Kerwin, will start to define marketing strategies, messages and processes, aligning the work everyone needs to consider to ensure effective recruitment of students.

The input of staff and our wider stakeholder community is key to the development and the implementation of our new strategy so on behalf of the team, thank you for your contributions so far and in the future.

If you have any questions or comments, please email [dartlet@aber.ac.uk](mailto:dartlet@aber.ac.uk).

**Daniel Benham**  
Director of Finance

## Pride in Stonewall index success

The University has climbed more than 100 places in the UK-wide Stonewall Workplace Equality Index survey, which measures its strength as an inclusive employer.

The annual Index is used to assess achievements and progress on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) inclusion in the workplace.

This year, the University has climbed 121 places to 116th across the UK and is the 12th best employer in Wales.

The AU Staff LGBT Network meets once a month. Further information about the group is available on the webpage - [www.aber.ac.uk/en/supporting-staff/lifestyle/aberlgb&tnetwork](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/supporting-staff/lifestyle/aberlgb&tnetwork).



Pictured celebrating the University's Stonewall success are (left to right) Debra Croft, Director of Equality, Gary Reed, Director - Research, Business & Innovation, Ruth Fowler Communications and Equalities Officer, and Professor John Grattan, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and International.

## Undergraduate of the Year



Kieran Stone (centre) receives his award from sponsor Andy Brown of FDM Group and writer and television presenter Konnie Huq

Final year Artificial Intelligence and Robotics student Kieran Stone won the Computer Science, IT and Physics Undergraduate of the Year award at the annual TARGETJobs awards.

Kieran received the FDM Group sponsored prize from writer and television presenter Konnie Huq at an awards ceremony held at London's Canary Wharf on 22 April.

Now in their 8th year, this year's TARGETJobs Undergraduate of the Year awards attracted 3,441 applications from universities across the UK.

A three stage assessment process which included an online assessment with situational, numerical and inductive reasoning tests and an in-person assessment with the respective award sponsor, whittled down the list of entrants to ten finalists for each of the twelve awards.

As part of his prize Kieran has won a month long internship at FDM Group's London office which he plans to take up this summer, once he completes his studies at Aberystwyth.

## Car-go delivers £10,000 InvEnterPrize

A concept driverless delivery vehicle developed by a team of Aberystwyth University students and a former student has received a £10,000 boost after winning InvEnterPrize 2017.

Car-go is the brainchild of students Ariel Ladegaard and Aparajit Narayan, and former student Pasi William Sachiti.

Ariel and Pasi were presented with a cheque for £10,000 by *The Apprentice* winner Alana Spencer after InvEnterPrize judges backed their concept on 27 March (pictured).

Billed as "perfect for deliveries in residential areas", Car-go uses a combination of advanced robotics and driverless vehicle technology. Its aim is to significantly reduce "last-mile delivery costs".

Car-go was one of six finalists to be considered by the 2017 InvEnterPrize panel which consisted of successful

Aberystwyth alumni from academia, industry and banking.

The Car-go team will use the InvEnterPrize prize money, which is donated by Aberystwyth alumni through the Aber Fund, to build their first prototype.



## Aber student wins two prizes for entrepreneurship

An enterprising Business and Management student has won two top awards in a national competition to find and showcase Wales' best young entrepreneurial talent.

Second year James Bryan was presented with the Future Entrepreneur and Overall Best Business (Higher Education) awards at the Big Ideas Celebrated finals held at Cardiff City Stadium on 30 March 2017 by Julie James AM, Minister for Skills and Science (pictured).

James won the awards for his innovative Snapsearch - for Snapchat app, which he launched on Apple iTunes and at <http://snapsearchapp.co> in October 2015.

"Snapsearch dramatically improves users' experience and allows them to better connect with each other on Snapchat. It makes Snapchat easier to use, safer and more fun," explains James, 20, who came up with the idea for Snapsearch whilst in sixth form.

Big Ideas Celebrated is a competition for 16 to 25 year olds in Wales, with individuals and groups entering their enterprise ideas or active business projects.

At the event in Cardiff, ten finalists were invited to give a one-minute pitch to a panel of judges about their idea or business, and the panel had a further three minutes to ask questions.

## Natural disaster rescue app GeoRescue wins SatelLife Challenge award

Physics and Planetary Physics student, Elliot Vale, has won an opportunity to present his idea for a natural disaster rescue app to delegates at a top UK space conference.

Elliot worked on the GeoRescue concept app with Tia Mountain, a student at the University of West of England. The pair will present GeoRescue at the UK Space Conference 2017 which takes place in Manchester from 30 May - 1 June.

Designed to help people living or travelling in high risk natural disaster areas, GeoRescue provides real-time information on predicted, at-risk and ongoing disasters.

It also aims to guide people out of the affected area using advanced maps services.

Once activated, the app will emit a signal using GPS to indicate a person's location for search and rescue services.

GeoRescue is one of twelve winners in the UK Space Agency's SatelLife Challenge.



The competition, which offered £50,000 in prize money, sought inspirational ideas from young people aged 11 to 22 on how satellite data could be used to improve life on Earth.

As runners up, Elliot and Tia won £5,000 and the opportunity to pitch their idea to a panel of 'dragons' from the UK space sector in June.

Their hope is that this pitch could lead to their idea being developed into a fully working app that could save lives.



## Major refurbishment of Geography laboratory

A traditional 1970s chemistry and physical analysis laboratory in the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences (DGES) has been transformed into a state-of-the-art science facility.

Representing an investment of over half a million pounds, the major refurbishment of C66 Kidson Laboratory in the Llandinam Building included thermally improving the building fabric to make it more energy efficient and installing new audio visual learning and teaching equipment.

The layout of the room has been reconfigured to create a multi-functional collaborative learning, demonstration and teaching space for the department's students.

Nia Jeremiah from the Estates Department, responsible for delivering the project explains: "This has been a challenging but exciting scheme for the Project Team, who worked closely with DGES colleagues to form an ambitious project brief, and oversaw the onsite works. This fantastic facility supports new teaching styles, allows more modern methods for conducting experiments and recording data, and will greatly enhance the students' learning experience."

Dr Tom Holt, a Lecturer in DGES comments: "Having used the Kidson Laboratory over the last 13 years as a student, a demonstrator and now a lecturer in Physical Geography, I'm particularly excited by this refurbishment. We've educated and inspired thousands of students in C66 over the years and they undoubtedly remember the time spent in the laboratory and the various staff that guided them through their practicals. I'm really excited for myself, my colleagues, and most of all our students who now have access to the

latest equipment and teaching facilities in our bespoke physical sciences laboratory."

The new laboratory was completed in time for the first practical session of

Semester 2 in February. The official opening will take place later in the summer, as part of the DGES Centenary celebrations.

## Estates improvements

As part of the continuing investment in our campuses and buildings, the Estates Department staff are approaching their busiest period of the year. The department has been planning and completing tendering processes over the winter months, and is looking forward to seeing the improvements come to fruition.

Improvement works in the pipeline, to name but a few, are:

- installation of a lift onto the piazza to improve access to the Arts Centre and Students Union;
- continued replacement of boilers in academic and residential buildings;
- resurfacing of roads and the Edward Llwyd car park;
- continued refurbishment of toilets;
- redecorating corridors, stairwells and foyers;
- improvements to street lighting, which is now in its third phase;
- a new roof for the Cledwyn building;
- improvement works to Cledwyn bridge and spur to address structural issues, add insulated cladding to the external façade, install modern double glazed window units and replace roof surface;
- new floor for Sports Centre swimming pool changing rooms.

In addition, the grounds will be improved with plans to sow more wildflower turf similar to the verge alongside the Hugh Owen building, which has received numerous compliments from staff, students and visitors.



## Spotlight on... the Administrative Staff Forum

The Administrative Staff Forum is a regular event organised **by Professional, Administrative and Support staff for Professional, Administrative and Support staff**. To discover what it's all about, *Aber News* spoke to two members of the organising team, Sue Clarke and Jean Jones.

### Tell us a bit about the Administrative Staff Forum?

The Admin Forum is all about sharing information, experience and skills with each other. The sessions aim to be interactive, informative, engaging and fun.

It is a Forum for sharing best practice and helping staff to keep abreast of changes going on in the University, as well as providing an insight into the bigger picture across the University and the Higher Education sector as a whole.

Some of our most popular sessions have focused on personal development and health and wellbeing topics, such as our session on mindfulness.

The Forum has also developed a role as an advocate for staff, helping to represent the view of admin, clerical and technical staff to the University's senior managers.

At the heart of the Forum is the aim to help us to help each other more, offering a chance to get to know others outside the usual work environment.

### Who can attend the Administrative Staff Forum?

Any member of University staff who is in a professional, administrative or clerical/support role can attend. Membership is entirely voluntary.

### How often does the Administrative Staff Forum meet and what are the meetings like?

We usually aim to hold 5-6 Forums each academic year. Each Forum lasts about two hours but the format is designed to be flexible, with each meeting split into two sessions, with a choice of whether to attend one or both.

We also hold a mini-conference once a year, with a key topical theme threaded throughout the day.

### What other benefits are there of getting involved in the Administrative Staff Forum?

We have an active SharePoint site (<https://prifysgolaber.sharepoint.com/sites/groups/admin-staff-forum/default.aspx>) where we share information and handouts from each session.

We also aim to highlight personal development opportunities through training or raising awareness of roles in areas of new activity.

Members of the Admin Forum also receive information about lunchtime sessions, internal and external events and can use the associated SharePoint site to ask questions of, or advice from, other administrative staff.

### Who's on the organising team?

They are a real cross section from across the University: Jean Jones (IGHPP/DGES), Sue Clarke (IPD/DIS), Stuart Beckley (IBERS), Fran Disbury (Education), Ruth Fowler (HR), Anka Furlan (IAH), Dominika Komaniecka (IBL), Alan Macmillan (AQRO) and Ceris Medhurst-Jones (IAH).

We meet regularly to plan the programme and welcome all ideas for sessions – so please get in touch if you would like to be informed about an issue, or would like to raise awareness of something relevant to colleagues.

### What's on the horizon for the Administrative Staff Forum?

We have our last Forum of this academic year on 13 July, when Professor Elizabeth Treasure will be addressing the Forum – to sign up, watch out for the email or visit the Centre for the Development of Staff and Academic Practice webpage. We are also planning our mini-conference which takes place in December.



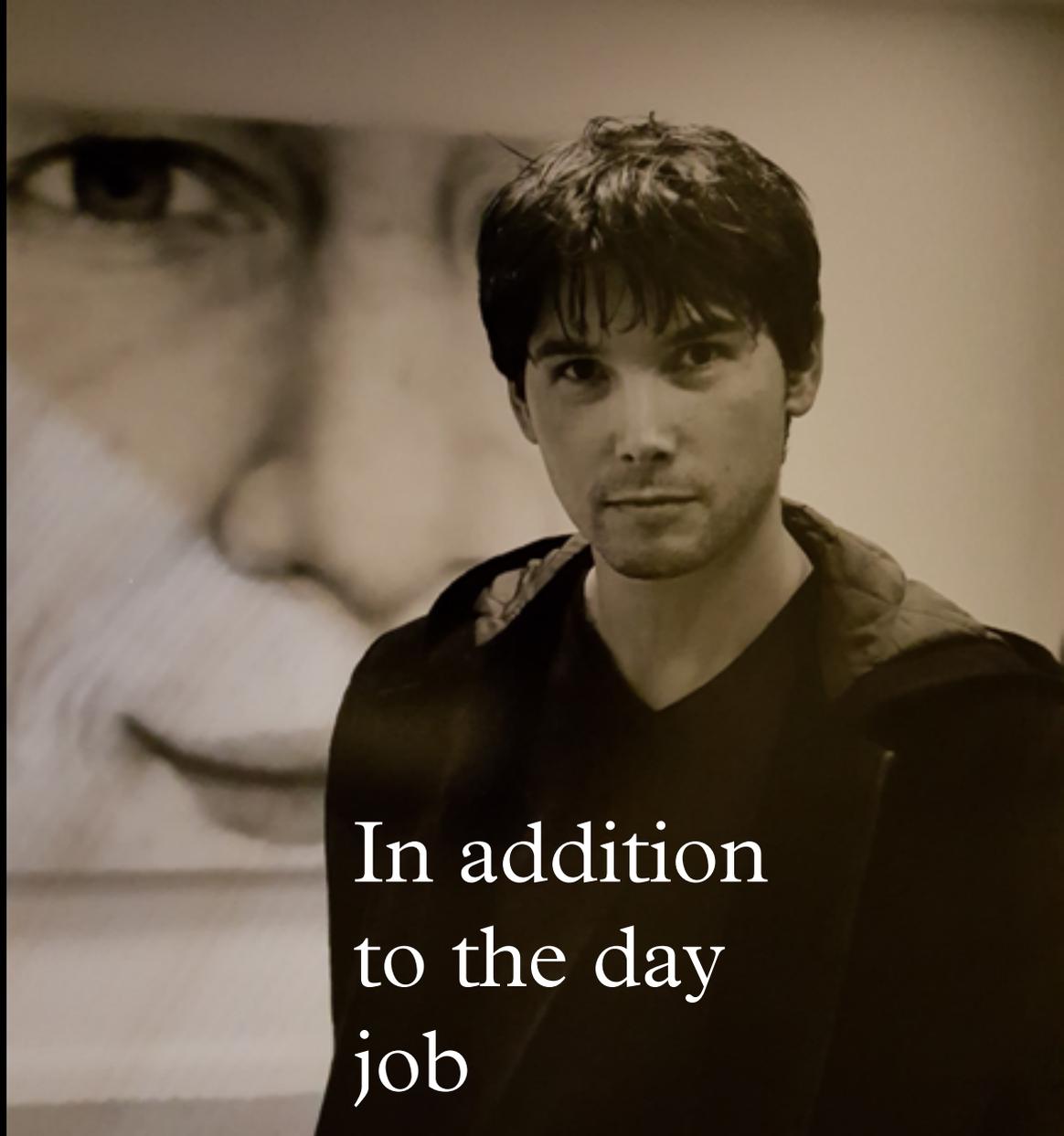
Members of the Admin Forum organising team.  
L to R: Ceris Medhurst-Jones, Fran Disbury, Stuart Beckley, Jean Jones, Sue Clarke, Alan Macmillan.  
Not pictured: Ruth Fowler, Anka Furlan, Dominika Komaniecka

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Michael Roberts works as an IT Supervisor in Information Services. However, in addition to the day job, he is an accomplished artist, specialising in hyper-real portraits which microscopically detail the intricacies of the facial surface. Michael recently featured on *SkyArts Portrait Artist of the Year*, where he was seen painting a portrait of actor Freddie Highmore.



## In addition to the day job

### **When did you first come to Aberystwyth?**

I came to Aberystwyth about 14 years ago. After getting a painting exhibited in the National Portrait Gallery I decided to study art further, with the aim of improving my skills, so I came to Aber to do a masters degree.

### **When did you develop your particular interest in capturing human skin in such a microscopic level of detail?**

I found while painting portraits I was increasingly drawn to the miniscule details, the way in which they tie individuals to their nature as a biological organism, something that makes them an individual but also suggests their belonging to something beyond themselves. I am also interested in the way in which intense details are at odds with the current beauty industry ideals.

### **How do you pick people that you would like to paint?**

I try to pick people with interesting facial features, colours and skin types. Recently I have been more drawn to painting members of my immediate family - I am interested to see if psychological elements start to appear within otherwise analytical studies of someone's appearance.

### **What do you like to know about your sitters before you paint them?**

Outside of the immediate family, I am not concerned with the sitters' personality, so I am happy knowing very little about them. It is their appearance alone that I want to capture.

### **Which artists influence your work most?**

Chuck Close was the first major influence I had; I initially tried to emulate his highly detailed photorealistic style. Alongside Close, the fleshy works of Jenny Saville and Lucian Freud have had a strong influence on my work; they manage to create a link between the viewer, the artist and the sitter in recreating the tactility of flesh and skin. I am also influenced by the Old Masters - Van Eyck, Johannes Vermeer, Rubens, Rembrandt, Da Vinci - to name a few.

### **Tell us a bit about what it was like being part of *SkyArts Portrait Artist of the Year 2017*?**

It was a lot of fun, and I enjoyed getting to meet the presenters, celebrities and the other artists. The time frame was difficult for me. I normally labour over a painting for months, but on the show I only had four hours, so that was quite intense. I also had a hideous cold and felt like passing out occasionally, so that didn't help!

**What is your favourite memory of the show?**

Breakfast.

**What's your advice for anyone who wants to get into painting?**

My advice would be not to give up. Painting and drawing can be very difficult at times and if things don't go as you would have liked, then keep trying. Mistakes are an essential part of the learning process. If something isn't going well, then walk away from it for a while, see how others have tackled similar things and try different approaches.

**What's on the horizon for you and your art?**

I am hoping to get a portrait in the National Portrait Gallery again next year. I have a portrait of my five year old daughter that I am working on and it's shaping up quite well.

I am also working on a landscape - a picture of the National Library - that I am hoping will be ready for the summer.

It is pretty hard to find the time to paint in the evenings at the moment. My wife and I have recently had a beautiful new addition to the family, Dylan, so time is a little hard to come by!



Top: 'Y Môr'  
Left: 'Eye'





## Ensuring a sweeter future

Siobhan Maderson from the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences is carrying out PhD research studying the traditional environmental knowledge of beekeepers and how this can be better utilised to support environmental sustainability. In this feature article, she describes her research, why it interests her, and why it is relevant to a wider audience. The article was recently shortlisted in the ESRC's Making Sense of Society writing competition, which aims to encourage and reward outstanding writing by ESRC-funded students.

My research? It's only of interest and relevance to people who eat food. If you've managed to transcend the biological links that connect you to the myriad other species who share this planet, feel free to look away now.

I'm studying the environmental knowledge of long-term beekeepers. By investigating what they have seen during their years of beekeeping, we gain a deeper understanding of exactly how and where the environment is changing, and how these changes affect pollinators.

Lately there has been a lot of media interest in and life science research on bees and pollinators. Pollinators are in trouble, and about 75 per cent of everything we eat and drink is dependent on them. We would probably survive without them - but that's all it would be. Survival. If you think British cuisine was grim before Oliver and Ottolenghi, imagine it without pollinators.

Beekeepers are recognised as key stakeholders when it comes to

monitoring and protecting bee and pollinator health. Some beekeepers were involved with drafting recent government policy initiatives which aim to reverse pollinator decline. My research raises important questions as to whether new policies will have their desired effect.

My interviewees have been keeping bees for at least 20 years - some for 50 or even 70 years. I've found that beekeepers develop a heightened awareness of wider environmental trends, such as changes in weather and flowering times, and the frequency of other bird, insect and animal species. Long term beekeepers are environmental sentinels and qualitative research on their knowledge can enhance other forms of environmental research, which are often temporally and spatially limited.

Recent years have seen a 'participatory turn' in governance. Efforts are being made to make government more accountable and inclusive, with 2016 notable for showing the level of political

disenfranchisement felt by many. Political decision-making processes affect us all - and the wider environment. It's more important than ever that policymakers, and the democratic process, engage with people who have been left out of the traditional networks of power. But are these efforts really working? And what happens when disparate voices collide with vested interests?

As we move into a 'post-truth world', we need to think about multiple truths and perspectives. And when it comes to bees, this means engaging with diverse, often contradictory beekeepers' opinions, and incorporating beekeepers' critiques of agricultural practices into land-use policies.

For every optimistic beekeeper who tells me pollinator strategies are succeeding because bees are in the media, I find another who is profoundly sceptical about whether government responses are anything more than window dressing. Many of my interviewees believe that

protecting pollinators will require radical changes.

Let's start with our food system. Producing and providing food for our ever-growing population has powerful environmental impacts. Industrial methods of food production are dependent on staggering quantities of pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides. Monocrops are grown on a massive scale. Bees and other pollinators are a vital part of the food systems that sustain us all. And yet our industrialised food system damages pollinators.

My interviewees are passionate about their bees, and this often leads them into a deeper engagement with their natural environment. In our increasingly digital age, we need to engage with what these people know and what they see. Their observations are more than a quirky hobby; beekeepers are holders of local environmental knowledge (LEK).

This tacit, experiential knowledge exists in Arctic communities' observations of changing ice patterns, in Turkish fishing communities, and in British beekeepers. All these groups are united by their long-term engagement with the natural world, and their knowledge of environmental trends and patterns is a product of their long-term experience – whether that is hunting, fishing, or beekeeping.

These communities express a real love for, and connection to their natural world. Many beekeepers are concerned that, for all the government policies espousing support for our precious pollinators, there are underlying problems in our industrial food system that will undermine the best efforts of all these policies. If we truly want to protect our pollinators, and ourselves, we need to take a hard look at our food production system, and our shopping basket.

Just ask a beekeeper – their LEK could be the key to our future. Research has shown that LEK can contribute to socio-ecological resilience but LEK, and its holders, are often not granted the same respect and significance as quantitative, scientific data. My research highlights the unique perspective, and benefits of beekeepers' experiential knowledge.

Engaging with different forms of knowledge will require significant changes to our economy, our society, and our attitude to the environment. But if we truly aspire to be sustainable, and develop participatory democratic systems that reflect the importance of the human and non-human inhabitants of our world, we need to make bold decisions that incorporate LEK.

Even the humble bee is a political animal.

## Awards and celebrations

Well it's nearly time to welcome the new freshers to Aber and the next academic year's officers into post, but not before we celebrate all AberSU has achieved since our last column:



### NUS Wales Awards

We were thrilled to return from the annual NUS Wales awards held in Llandudno on 14 March with two awards, a runner up prize and a special mention:

- AberSU is now officially the 'NUS Wales Higher Education Students' Union of the Year'
- We were also jointly awarded the 'Student Opportunities Award' to share with Bangor
- Our lovely officer team reached the shortlist for 'Officer Team of the Year'
- and our Finance Assistant Rebecca Thompson also had a special mention for the 'Staff Member of the Year' category.

### Other wins

This year's success doesn't stop there:

- AberSU Chief Executive, Trish McGrath was awarded an ACEVO Fellowship
- Our President, Lauren Marks was elected to the NUS Wales National Executive Council
- Our Welsh Affairs Officer and UMCA President, Rhun Dafydd was elected to sit on the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol Board
- The National Societies Awards shortlist has been announced and Aber societies have been shortlisted for 10 out of 15 of the categories. Winners will be announced at an awards evening on 19 May.

### Election record turnout

2017 was a record breaking year for Aberystwyth elections with a total number of 2,290 students voting in the elections, resulting in the highest ever elections turnout at Aberystwyth – 28%

Congratulations to all candidates that stood for election. A full list of elected candidates can be found in the news section of the AberSU website.

### AberSU Celebrates Week

At the beginning of May we celebrated all things AberSU with our very first AberSU Celebrates Week; a chance to say "diolch yn fawr" (thank you very much) to all the fabulous staff and incredible students who make AberSU great.

For a round-up of the week's shout-outs and the results from the three awards' evenings, please have a look at the news section of the AberSU website.

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

### Eleri Wyn

AberSU Marketing and Communications Manager

## Athena Swan – why all the fuss?

The University will be submitting an application to renew its Athena Swan Chartermark in the autumn. We've been asking a few questions about why Athena Swan is important and how staff can get involved.



### What is it?

The Athena SWAN gender equality Chartermark scheme recognises and celebrates good practice in recruiting, retaining and promoting women in higher education.

### Why is it important?

Unless we monitor, plan and work towards gender equality in all areas of the University we will be missing out on, losing mid-career, or under-utilising the skills of ALL of the workforce and student body (as workers of the future). A commitment to gender equality is a key part of the Equality Strategic Plan.

### What's the University doing about it?

The University achieved the Athena SWAN Bronze Award in 2014 (at that time for STEM departments only) and the Bronze Gender Equality Mark for Social Science departments.

In November this year, we will be submitting our renewal plans for the whole University for Athena SWAN for the next 3 years.

Data from the Gender Equality Survey that was conducted in February/March and comments from the drop-in session at Medrus Mawr held on 9 May will feed into this process, allowing us to have an Action Plan based on the real life experience of all of our staff and students.

Excitingly, Computer Science submitted a departmental application in April – results announced in the Autumn.

### How can I get involved?

If you have practical and implementable suggestions for improvements, plaudits or gripes, thoughts about employment, recruitment (staff and students), services, research areas, or curriculum content and gaps, then please get in touch.

Use the [equstaff@aber.ac.uk](mailto:equstaff@aber.ac.uk) e-mail or join and post to the @AUAthenaSwan facebook group – or tweet to @AberEandD.

Another drop-in session is also being planned for the autumn, to review the draft Action Plan. Be an active part of change.

## European Rugby 7 Cup

The University's Rugby Hub Officer, Llŷr Thomas, accompanied the Aberystwyth University Men's Rugby Team to northern France over Easter weekend, to compete in the European Rugby 7s Cup.

Hosted by EDHEC Business School in Lille from 15-17 April, the student rugby tournament involved teams from sixteen universities from across Europe.

The squad faced a challenging first day against strong competition. In the competition for the Bowl on the second

day, the Aberystwyth University team saw a turnaround of fortunes, beating teams from France and England to reach the final against University Paris Dauphine. Aberystwyth won the final comfortably, with a final score of 31-0, and were awarded the Bowl.

The team's involvement in the tournament was made possible by the Aber Fund, the giving programme for alumni, parents, staff and friends of the University, which funded travel expenses for the team.





## My research

Aber News is shining a spotlight on the often hidden work carried out by our Postdoctoral Research Assistants (PDRAs). In the first in a series of features Dr Ryan Wilson, PDRA in Remote Sensing and Glaciology, tells us about the focus of his research.

### Describe your research in a nutshell?

My research activities are mostly centred on the monitoring of the cryosphere (the frozen part of the Earth's surface) using GIS and remote sensing datasets with the aim of achieving a better understanding of past, present and future change and its subsequent impacts on the environment.

I have also been lucky enough to be involved in several field expeditions to various cold and icy parts of the world during which I have helped to install glacio-hydrological instrumentation and operated surveying equipment.

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

I am currently working on the NERC-RCUK-CONICYT funded "Glacial hazards in Chile: processes, assessment, mitigation and risk management strategies" project. Together with Professor Neil Glasser and other partners from the UK and Chile, I am responsible for the collection and analysis of data, as well as contributing to the broader development and delivery of the project.

My typical day varies according to what stage of the project we have reached.

In early 2017, I was planning and preparing for a three-week field campaign to the Chilean Andes which was completed in February. This involved organising logistics, purchasing equipment, collecting permits, discussing aims and objectives, making lots of

field site maps and brushing up on my Spanish.

With all the field data and equipment now safely back in Aberystwyth, my day currently consists of processing and analysing aerial drone imagery and glacial lake bathymetry measurements, mapping surface features in GIS, interpreting findings, drinking lots of tea and discussing results with the project team.

I am also preparing abstracts and overviews for future glacial hazards related conferences and workshops.

Finally, I am also responsible for communicating the project research to wider audiences and I regularly update the projects website and Facebook (@GlacialHazardsinChile) and Twitter (@GlacialHazards) pages.

### What do you find most rewarding?

I think the most rewarding part of my job is having the opportunity to work with and learn from experts and project stakeholders from a range of different backgrounds including glaciology, remote sensing, geomorphology and hazard management, amongst others.

This has really helped to develop my skills and connections as a relatively early career researcher.

Through working with these people you are also given confidence and freedom to

explore new ideas and research strands.

I have also had the opportunity to work in some amazing places. In February, for example, we visited the large floodplain of a recent glacial lake outburst flood in Patagonia, and it really helped me to appreciate and further understand the destructive power of these events.

### What do you find most challenging?

I think one of the most interesting aspects of being a researcher is that you are faced with new challenges on a daily basis, some of which you can never anticipate.

Challenges can range from being conceptual, such as trying to plan out the content and structure of a new scientific paper, to being more technical, such as resolving a small issue related to a software package you are working with.

The good thing is that it means no day is ever quite the same.

Sometimes the most challenging thing is learning to turn my research head off when I get home. My wife and I now have a four month old son and although he is an absolute star and we are enjoying every minute of being parents, it certainly puts all other challenges into perspective.

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

## Appointments

A warm welcome to colleagues who have joined the University in recent months, including:

### VICE-CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE



**Professor Elizabeth Treasure** took up the post of Vice-Chancellor of the University on 3 April. Previously Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Cardiff University, Professor Treasure holds a BDS in Dental Surgery and a PhD from the University of Birmingham.

### HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT



**Andy Wainwright** has been appointed interim health and safety manager. Andy joined us in 2014 as Fire Safety Advisor and holds qualifications in health and safety, advanced investigative practice, and electrical installations. He is an active member of the Institute of Fire Engineers representing

Mid and West Wales on the Engineering Council UK.

### INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS AND LAW



**Gavin Zhao** has been appointed Director of International Strategy to lead the development and delivery of the institute's international strategy and plan. Gavin has nearly 10 years' experience working in the higher education sector, and prior to joining Aberystwyth was Deputy Head

of International Operations at the University of Dundee.

### DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE



**Dr Zaineb Chelly Dagdia** joined the department in March as a Research Fellow, having won the Marie-Sklodowska-Curie Individual European Fellowship. Zaineb completed her PhD in 2014 at Institut Supérieur de Gestion de Tunis (Tunisia), where she previously held a position of Associate

Professor. Her research interests include evolutionary algorithms, machine learning, reasoning under uncertainty and Big Data.

### DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS



**Dr Himantha Cooray** has joined the department as a postdoctoral research associate to work on the hydrodynamics of wet foam. Himantha is from Sri Lanka where he studied chemical engineering in University of Moratuwa. He completed his PhD in physics and a

postdoctoral research in fluid mechanics in University of Cambridge before joining Aberystwyth.



**Dr Paolo Musolino** has joined the Department of Mathematics as a Sêr Cymru II COFUND Fellow, also supported by the Sêr Cymru NRN-LCEE. Paolo has a PhD from the University of Padova, and is developing mathematical tools which can be useful for analysing, for

example, properties of composite and porous materials.

### DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND EARTH SCIENCE



**Dr Xianjiao Ou** works as Marie Curie COFUND Ser Cymru II Research Fellow on the project "Understanding the RespONse OF glaciers in the 'Third Pole' to rapid climate change (ROOFToP)" with Professors Helen Roberts and Geoff Duller. This project will develop a novel luminescence dating

technique and investigate glaciers response to climate change in Tibet.



**Sayeh Hasan** joined the University as a postdoctoral researcher in March. She was previously a PhD student at Research centre Juelich in Germany. Her main research interests include active and passive microwave theory and remote sensing with emphasis on polarimetric radar and

radiometer techniques for hydrological, and agricultural parameter modelling and estimation.

## Obituaries

### Professor Sandra Brown (1944-2017)

An internationally distinguished scientist, Professor Sandra Brown was appointed Honorary Professor at the Department of Geography and Earth Sciences (DGES) in 2012. Her long and accomplished career focused on tropical forests and specifically on the impacts of human-induced deforestation and degradation on carbon pools and fluxes. A tribute to Professor Brown can be found on the Winrock International website: [www.winrock.org/news/in-memoriam-dr-sandra-brown-1944-2017/](http://www.winrock.org/news/in-memoriam-dr-sandra-brown-1944-2017/)

### Dr John Corton

John was a well-known and valued member of staff at IBERS. He first came to Gogerddan in 2010 to do his PhD and was part of the international ProGrass research project to produce bio-energy

from mature grasslands. John received his doctorate in 2015 and became a Post Doctoral Research Assistant on the BEACON project working in the field of converting biomass into biobased products. He also taught on the MSc in Green Biotechnology.

### Dorothy Evans

Dorothy Evans was a former secretary in the Department of European Languages and manuscript-typist to a whole host of colleagues in the period between the 1970s and 1990s.

### Dr Michael (Mike) Johnston

An alumnus of Aberystwyth, Dr Mike Johnston gained his BSc in Zoology in 1957, and his PhD at the National University of Australia, Canberra, in 1967. He researched widely in the field of fish

parasitology. He was for many years an admissions tutor for the Institute of Biological Sciences at Aberystwyth University, and an academic tutor in the department for 30 years.

### Dr Sandra Pierre (1978-2017)

Dr Sandra Pierre had been a colleague and friend to many in IBERS and the wider University community over several years. In research, she made significant contributions to understanding plant biochemistry: to improve the health of plants and also of the humans who eat them. Between 2006 and 2010, she worked on her PhD at IBERS which focused on the study of Witches' Broom Disease of *Theobroma cacao*. Prior to this she studied at Paris VI University and Angers University in France.

## SnapAber Photography Competition

SnapAber is the University's student and staff photography competition. It invites the submission of photographs on a different theme each month, from which a panel of judges choose one winning picture. The winning photographer wins a £50 top-up on their Aber Card.

The theme for May's competition is 'Love Aber'. To submit your photograph based on your interpretation of this theme, simply email your entry to [snap@aber.ac.uk](mailto:snap@aber.ac.uk) with your full name and department by 5pm on Friday 26 May. For more details, see [www.aber.ac.uk/en/social-media/snapaber](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/social-media/snapaber).

Images submitted will feature on the University's [SnapAber Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Flickr](#) pages and shared on all Aberystwyth University social media account pages. A final end of year exhibition of selected entries will be on display during December 2017.

Submitted works will also be included for use in AU marketing material, publications and in print and digital form. Judges decisions are final - please

read the competition rules and regulations.

The theme for next month's competition will be announced on 1 June.



April SnapAber winner - David Casebow, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Agriculture Student

## Strictly Aber Charity Dance

On 1 April, student society Aberystwyth DanceSport teamed up with local group Dance with Feathersteps to hold a 'Strictly Aber for Charity' dance evening in Medrus Mawr.

The evening was attended by over one hundred people, who enjoyed an evening of dancing, demonstrations, a cake sale, and a raffle with prizes donated by local businesses. The event raised £1,275 for the Teenage Cancer Trust.

The Teenage Cancer Trust creates world-class cancer services for young people in the UK, providing life-changing care and support so young people don't have to face cancer alone. The Strictly Aber for Charity Just Giving page is still accepting donations: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/AberystwythDanceSport>

Aberystwyth DanceSport is the Aber Students' Union ballroom and latin dance club, which teaches dancing to students, represents University at national dance competitions and has a history of successful fundraising for charities.

This event built on the success of a previous event organised by Aberystwyth DanceSport and Dance with Feathersteps in 2015 which raised over £900 for Cancer Research UK.

## School of Art Exhibitions

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



**Alternative Facts:  
Interpreting Works from  
the School of Art Collection  
22 May - 29 September**

Curated by students enrolled in the undergraduate module Staging an Exhibition, the show explores the historic functions of visual culture as a reflection of reality and as social commentary.

Responding to the state of veracity in a 'post-truth'

climate - and the fact that both 'post-truth' and 'surreal' were words of the year 2016 - *Alternative Facts* also considers the role of the museum curator as reliable storyteller and trusted guide.

The exhibition includes works from the collection by Conrad Atkinson, Claire Curneen, Stephen Dixon, Rigby Graham, Honoré Daumier, James Gillray, Angelica Kauffmann, John Keane, Erich Lessing, Hilary Paynter, Hans Saebens, Roberto Salbitani, Paul Scott, Joe Tilson, Carole Windham and Jesse Wine.

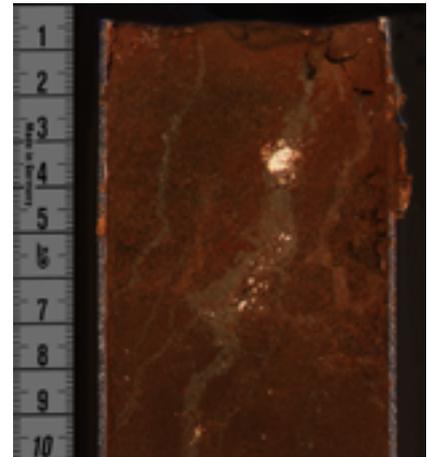


'Mermaid', Japan, late 19th century

**Undergraduate Degree Show and Postgraduate Exhibition  
22 May - 1 June**

Painting, printmaking, photography, illustration, drawing and other media by 33 undergraduate and 12 postgraduate students spread throughout the School of Art Gallery and building.

## Aberystwyth Arts Centre



Arts Centre Exhibition -  
2A: Earth Core: The Hominin Project

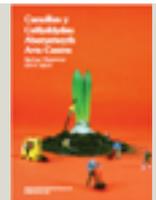
**2A: Earth Core: The Hominin Project  
20 May - 10 June,  
Gallery 1**

Artist Julian Ruddock explores the relationship between art, science and climate change. This collaboration with HSPDP, The Hominin Sites and Paleolakes Drilling Project focuses on scientific research in Ethiopia which explores how climate change has driven human evolution.

Further information:

<http://cargocollective.com/artscienceclimatechange/>  
<https://vimeo.com/133438863>

Make sure you pick up the Arts Centre spring brochure. The brochure is also available on the website:



[www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk](http://www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk)

**Flashdance**  
THE MUSICAL  
16 August - 2 September  
16 Awst - 2 Medi

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