



The Worshipful Company of Water Conservators

THE WATER CONSERVATION TRUST



The Water Conservation Trust reviews its Bursaries Programme

A Conference took place on 3 July 2013 in London, attended by over 80 people from universities, industry and donors, to review the outcomes of the Universities Bursary Programme run by The Water Conservation Trust.

Chaired by Lord Macdonald of River Glaven, Warden of Wadham College, the Programme's positive impact on universities was noted as well as its crucial importance to individual Bursary holders.



Opening the bursary review, Master Water Conservator **Ivor Richards**, explained the commitment of the Livery Company to improving the perception of the water and environment sector, and the quality and relevance of research and education. The Company's registered charity, The Water Conservation Trust, had devised its Universities Programme around bursaries for postgraduate students' fees and other support for university departments. The Company aims to extend and deepen its relationship with universities in the future.

Ivor Richards, Master, Water Conservator

Starting with a pilot at Exeter University in early 2007, the Programme's first three-year agreement in 2007 was with Wadham College, Oxford University, followed by Sheffield and Brunel in 2008. After the 2012 intake, the Trust had assisted 44 students at 11 UK universities. The time had come for a review of the Programme and, particularly, to hear the views of the students themselves as to the importance and usefulness of the bursaries.

The Company and Trust were grateful to **Lord Macdonald**, Warden of Wadham, for agreeing to chair this event, which was part of the review.

Lord Macdonald said the connection with Wadham had been extremely useful. The bursaries awarded to Wadham over the last six years had allowed the College to identify strong candidates who, otherwise, would not have stayed in the sector.



Lord Macdonald

The performance of the bursary holders had been generally good and, in some cases, exceptional. The bonds created between the Company and Trust on the one hand, and the university and the bursary students would endure.

Five bursary holders had agreed to contribute to this review with presentations, followed by a question and answer session and conclusions.



Caroline Hepburn

Caroline Hepburn (University of Sheffield, 2010) had been awarded an MSc in Contaminant Hydrogeology. The bursary had enabled her to take her first choice subject at Sheffield. Her dissertation was *Building a Teaching Exercise for Groundwater Modelling*. The modular course covered a range of water and environment topics and she is now working towards a PhD at Cranfield University, studying techniques for the removal of siloxanes from biogas.



Kath Rothwell

Katherine Rothwell (Newcastle University, 2012) approached the Trust directly, and following discussions with the School of Civil Engineering and Geosciences, the Trust awarded a bursary and has continued the cooperation into 2013-14. The subject area of Kath's dissertation *Calculating Background Threshold Contaminant levels in Gateshead for Lead, Arsenic and Cadmium* is major importance to environmental planners.



Girish Rambaran

Girish Rambaran (Brunel University, 2010) as a mature candidate, Girish had particular need of the bursary. Already committed to a career in wildlife protection in the London area, his MSc in Climate Change Impacts and Sustainability and his dissertation *Retaining the integrity of an SSI in a changing climate: Frays Farm Meadows* [in London] has a direct bearing on the management of urban wetlands, and consequences for water conservation practices.



Hannah Wooldridge

Hannah Wooldridge (University of Sheffield, 2009) modules for her MSc in Contaminant Hydrogeology, included the fate and transport of pollutants in ground water, remediation, and the natural attenuation of pollutants. Her dissertation *Spatial variability in physical and geochemical properties of sediments affecting nitrogen attenuation in the hyporheic zone of the River Tern* has led to consultancy work on site investigations into agrichemical and chemical pollutants.



Patrick Thomson

Patrick Thomson (Wadham College, 2010) was a mature student with experience in international development, particularly in Africa. Looking for a career change he returned to Oxford to take an MSc in Water Science, Policy & Management. With local knowledge his dissertation *GSM-enabled remote monitoring of rural handpumps: a proof of concept study* has led to further work for the Oxford Unit, with aid agencies support, to test and implement the research in Kenya.

A number of question were asked about the technical issues surrounding each student's research and post-graduation work: sources for siloxanes (including cosmetics) and consequences (silica (sand) deposits in combustion chambers); problems in setting background levels for heavy metal contamination in former industrial areas; the carbon release dangers with wetlands drying out; the need to understand the fate of nitrogen in hyporheic zones, and the ability of the GSM project to assess the relative efficiency of pumps in operational circumstances.

Looking at the bursary mechanism, the conclusion reached was that the studies, projects and subsequent careers of the bursary students would make a significant contribution to the sector.

Colin Bland, Chairman of the Water Conservation Trust said that Trustees were pleased with the outcomes but because the programme is entirely funded by contributions from Company Members and donations there was a limit as to how far the Trust could make an impact using bursaries alone. That said, during 2013-14 the Trust has announced that the Bursary Programme would be extended to 14 universities, and bursaries worth £80,000 would be awarded.



Colin Bland, Trust Chairman

Colin thanked the event sponsors: Pinsent Masons, WAMITAB, ESAET and Brunel University. The Trustees would take the views expressed into account in their review.