



GeoPoint

Newsletter of the Association of Geography Teachers of Ireland

A Geographical Future

Welcome to the first 2010 issue of GeoPoint. The period since October has been eventful. The massive November floods raised the issue of human interference with the natural processes active in river systems. In addition, Global Warming quite rightly received even more attention with some arguing the once-off nature of the floods whilst others pointed to the impact of Global Warming on Ireland. The heavy snowfalls of January again raised questions about the seemingly increasingly regularity of extreme weather events. Ironically, for a country half flooded in November, we experienced water shortages in January (indeed, water restrictions are on-going).

Mathematics, Science and Technology have been promoted as subjects necessary to help the country climb the Knowledge Economy ladder. While this is important, so is knowing how to adequately manage the planning challenges raised by population changes and economic development and how to adapt to the challenges Global Warming will throw at us. Fundamental to this is an appreciation of geographical processes. While we often try to sell Leaving Certificate Geography on the basis of the careers for which it is useful or how much a student will enjoy it, increasingly, if not immediately obvious, geography will become central to human survival. Tech-filled and science-clad the future may well be; but where it occurs is will be determined by the geographical sciences.

The COP15 conference in Copenhagen in December produced little of substance but it was an important milestone towards 2012 which marks the end of the Kyoto Protocol (<http://www.denmark.dk/en/menu/Climate-Energy/COP15-Copenhagen-2009/cop15.htm>) for information and presentations from the conference.

In January the world was shocked by the enormous impact of the earthquake in Haiti. Haiti already had its own unique set of problems. It has a long history of political instability. Massive deforestation created severe slope instability in the east of the country. It is the least developed state in the Western Hemisphere. Its GDP is \$4.3 Billion for a population of 8.5 million people. It regularly has to pick up the pieces of the hurricane season and poverty is so deep that many Haitians were reduced to eating mud cakes to stave off the feelings that accompany under nutrition. Ironically, concrete roofs to resist hurricanes had replaced corrugated roofs on many buildings. Unfortunately, the walls of the same buildings were not structurally earthquake resistant and the weight of the concrete roofs merely added to the disaster. The emergency and aid workers initially were falling over each other but quickly began to deliver aid and even find people trapped long after the government had declared an official end to the rescue effort. Haiti needs an internationally coordinated strategy to just get back to where it was before the earthquake. News that 6 of its creditor states have cancelled its debt is a good start in what is likely to be a ten year programme. Hopefully, this time around Haiti's people will get the development they need.

Peter Lydon
President, AGTI

How the World Works

The Debt and Development Coalition Ireland in association with the NCCA has developed a Transition Unit entitled 'How the World Works'. While the unit is targeted at Transition Year, much of its content is suited to the Leaving Certificate. Using a range of active learning methodologies 'How the World Works' helps students explore their attitudes to development as well learning about a range of issues such as Debt, Trade, Capital and Tax Flows and Aid.

A resource handbook to accompany the Transition Unit is currently being finalised after a very successful pilot. Financial support was received from Irish Aid, the government's official aid programme.

The East Central Branch will workshop the unit in March but it is planned to roll the unit out nationally after publication.

GWENDA HURST MEMORIAL AWARDS 2009

The Annual Gwenda Hurst Memorial Lecture was held on November 18th in the Museum Building in Trinity College. The Annual lecture represents an opportunity to commemorate the work of the founder of the AGTI, Gwenda Hurst and also to make a number of awards.

This year's lecture, entitled Global Warming, was delivered by **Mr. Gerald Fleming** of Met Eireann. Mr. Fleming has lectured for the Association before and we were honoured that he accepted our invitation to deliver Gwenda Hurst lecture. The lecture was gripping and very well illustrated with data from the IPCC and highlighted the urgency of addressing the problem of Global Warming.

The 2009 Gwenda Hurst Medal for the student achieving the highest score in the Leaving Certificate was **Niamh Lucheroni** of St Vincent's Secondary School Dundalk. Her teacher was **Fiona Butler**. Mr. Fleming presented the Medal to Niamh and Gwen Bannister, Association Secretary, presented flowers to Fiona. Congratulations to Niamh and Fiona.

The Gwenda Hurst Trustees also make an award to the writer of the article in the current Geographical Viewpoint which the Editorial Committee consider warrants the greatest merit in helping other Geography Teachers to improve their

performance and enjoy their subject. Two Viewpoints were published in 2009 so there are two winners. **Derek Kirwan**, a teacher at Wesley College Dublin was awarded the Volume 36 award for his article 'Practical Demonstrations in Geography Teaching'. The award for Volume 37 was made to **Gaye Ashford** a Phd Student at St Patrick's Drumcondra for her article 'Moate Farm, a Case Study'. Congratulations to both winners.

The Association also made further presentations. One was to **Sheila Graham** of Wilson's Hospital School who, by her dedication as Branches' Secretary since 1998, and more recently as Secretary to the Executive Committee helped oversee the transition to the new AGTI structures. Sheila has now stepped down from this position. We are very grateful to Sheila for all her work.

The second award was made to **Dr. Ruth McManus** whose tireless efforts set a new standard in the production of our journal, Geographical Viewpoint. Ruth has stepped down from this position after 7 years and one of her colleagues at St. Patrick's College, **Dr. Susan Hegarty** has accepted the Association invitation to become the new Editor of Viewpoint. Many thanks to Ruth for all her work and effort on our behalf. Welcome and best wishes to Susan.



Branch News

AGTI East Central Branch

Half Day Work Shop - **Saturday 20th March 2010 from 9.30am** - Church of Ireland College of Education Upper Rathmines Road, Dublin 6.

How the World Works - Module on Development Studies

Annette Honan (NCCA) & Nessa Ni Chasaide (Debt and Development Coalition Ireland)

Evaluating Junior Certificate Text Books

Peter Lydon - this will be a hands-on workshop - it is necessary to have your Junior Certificate Textbook to attend this workshop, you must reserve a place first by emailing peterlydon@iol.ie

News of events and activities in the Branches is updated on the website www.agti.ie as notices come in from branch Secretaries.

National Executive News

Planning will begin shortly for our 2010 Conference. This is usually held on the first weekend in October. This year we are hoping to ensure that there is no conflict of dates with other conferences. News from other subject associations can be found on www.sarg.ie. **If you have suggestions about topics, issues or lectures you would like to see addressed at the conference, please email your suggestions to peterlydon@iol.ie.**

Resource Point

Weather Maps

www.meteireann.ie is useful for satellite and media-friendly weather maps. <http://www.met.ie/gfd/default.asp> has a nice graphic illustrating briefly how a weather forecast is made. For showing how weather systems progress over a number of days, I prefer the UK Met Office page at http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/europe/surface_pressure.html which has surface pressure charts forecasting European weather over 3 days.

IPCC

<http://www.ipcc.ch/> is the homepage of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The site is crammed full of useful information. Especially useful are its reports and accompanying charts and graphs. Over the course of 4 major reports on climate change, the ability to increase the level of detail in climate analysis has produced an even clearer picture of climate change. Whatever are one's view of the causes of Global Warming, the data presented on the site about what is happening to climate appears conclusive.

World 'o' Meters

<http://www.worldometers.info/> will intrigue your students. Scroll down to the energy section and see how many days are left until oil runs out!

Haiti Earthquake

Technical details are available at <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/recenteqsww/Quakes/us2010rja6.php#details>.

The Guardian has great coverage of the earthquake and it's aftermath. Just search 'Haiti Earthquake' at www.guardian.co.uk. Particularly interesting is <http://www.guardian.co.uk/open-platform/blog/mapping-a-crisis>. See for yourself.

The Red Cross has excellent reports of its work in Haiti <http://www.redcross.org/> for more information.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8510900.stm> demonstrates a comparison between the recent earthquakes in China and Italy to understand why the Haiti quake was so devastating.

Haiti Statistics -

Poverty headcount ratio at \$1 a day (PPP, %)	- 54
Poverty headcount ratio at 2\$ a day (PPP, %)	- 78
Life expectancy at birth (years)	- 52
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	- 76
Child malnutrition (%of children under 5)	- 17
Access to an improved water source (% of population)	- 54
Access to improved sanitation facilities (% of population)	- 30
Agriculture (% of GDP)	- 25.6
Industry	- 16.0
Manufacturing	- 8.3
Services	- 51.1
Exports of goods and services	- 14.0
Imports of goods and services	- 41.0

source: CIA World Factbook

Notes: