



Geography A-level



Balcarras School





Teddy Holbrook- Year 12- As Geography



Tell us about yourself?

Hello, my name is Teddy and I am currently in Year 12 at Balcarras and I have been here since Year 7

Why do you think it is important to study geography?

Geography is an integral part of our society and everywhere you look has an element of Geography within it, so by understanding the principles of Geography, in my eyes allows you to see the world and the way the media presents the world through a whole new perspective.

Why did you decide to study Geography at A-level?

I have always enjoyed studying Geography, and the GCSE course also intrigued me further into finding out more about the world I live in, so I thought by studying Geography further it will allow me to explore in that way. Additionally, I am applying to study Geography at Oxford University, so the A-level would aid this effectively.

What other subjects do you study and how do they complement each other?

Alongside Geography, I study Maths, English Literature and Economics. Geography and Economics work very well together, as both courses interact with each other at different points, and both courses present different perspectives on the world that we live in. Additionally, English Literature is very helpful in enhancing my essay skills within the longer responses. Also within the skills section of Geography, statistics of which I study in Maths is used, so overall works well with the subject

What was the best thing about the course?

I think the diversity of topics and the different perspectives and models in the world which are used allows the course to be my favourite subject

Why should somebody who is thinking about geography as an A-level option pick it?

If you are intrigued about the world around you, and are interested in learning about both physical and human aspects of the world A level Geography will provide you with the skills to look at the world in a whole new light both now and for the rest of your life

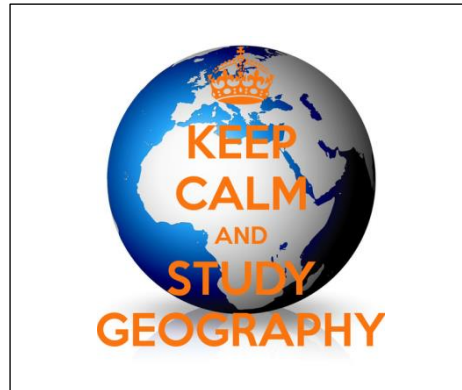


“There has never been a better or more important time to study geography. With growing interest in issues such as climate change, migration, environmental degradation and social cohesion, geography is one of the most relevant courses you could choose to study”.

Dr Rita Gardner, Director of the Royal Geographical Society

"Geography is the subject which holds the key to our future" - Michael Palin

The study of geography stimulates an interest in; and a sense of wonder about places, people and the environment. It helps young people make sense of a complex and dynamically changing world. Also how society, the economy and environment combine to bring about change. It explains where places are, how places and landscapes are formed. Additionally how people and their environment interact, and how a diverse range of economies, societies and environments are interconnected, and examines natural resources and their sustainable use.



What will I gain from studying geography?

- Intellectual skills, such as critically evaluating theories and judging evidence in order to make informed decisions and to develop reasoned arguments
- Research skills, such as using a range of technical methods for the collection and analysis of spatial and environmental data, and undertaking fieldwork
- Transferable skills, such as teamwork, problem solving, IT skills, communication skills (presentation, writing, debating)
- Personal attributes, such as time-management, development of responsibility, coping with uncertainty, self-reflection, motivation, flexibility, and creativity



“Without geography you're nowhere.” Jimmy Buffett



Increasingly popular at A and AS Level: *it is one of the most popular subjects with over 55,600 taking an exam at either A Level or AS Level.*

Importance recognised by government: *the government’s decision to include geography as one of the humanities within the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), aimed at getting more students to study core subjects at GCSE.*

Employable: *geography graduates become some of the most sought after graduates by employers. They are less likely to be unemployed after their degree course than those studying other subjects.*



Excellent exam results and success rates at Balcarras.....

Grade	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
A*-B	75%	69%	70%	59%	63%	67%	68%	76%	73%
A*/A	9.4%	7%	9%	15%	23%	27%	39%	44%	48%

Pupils in geography at Balcarras perform in the top 15% of schools and significantly and consistently score better than other schools with similar pupils

"Everything has to do with geography" Judy Martz



Leanne Walker- Year 13- A-level
Geography

Tell us about yourself?

I originally came from Cleeve School, but decided to come to Balcarras as it has very good results, and I wanted a new environment to work in to keep me motivated. I studied Geography, Biology, Business Studies and Maths.

Why do you think it is important to study geography?

Geography is relevant to almost every world event, for example many news stories are about migration, natural disasters which involve aid and support from other countries. We also learn about Antarctica and flood management which are big topics of debate at the moment.

Why did you decide to study Geography at A-level?

During my GCSE's I found Geography the most interesting subject as it is applicable to so many different areas. Once I finish sixth form, I would like to study an subject area at university which involves many parts of the human geography aspects, such as the health, migration and development.

What other subjects do you study and do they complement each other?

I think that Biology and Business complement geography the most, as there is a topic on health in the human course, which links the two together. There is also a lot of links between Geography and business, for example ethical sources for companies, and also the movement and employment of people.

What was the best thing about the course?

My personal favourite area of the course is the human side, as I am especially interested in the health and migration aspects.

Why should somebody who is thinking about geography as an A-level option pick it?

It is a very interesting subject as you learn a lot about the world around you. It also makes you more aware of why particular events happen, and why many places in the world have to change and adapt to the developing world. If you want to learn about physical aspects of the world, you are able to learn about cold environments including glaciers and rivers in detail, which allows you to fully understand how and why they are there.



"Geography is highly valued by universities as an A Level choice"

The Russell Group report published in 2011 names geography as one of the eight facilitating subjects. This is a subject most likely to be required or preferred for entry to degree courses and choosing facilitating subjects will keep more options open to you at university.

“I like geography best, he said, because your mountains & rivers know the secret. Pay no attention to boundaries.” Brian Andreas

Experienced staff



Mrs N Lambert-Masters

Head of Geography

Specialism: Globalisation and international development



Mrs E Cullis

Assistant Head teacher

Specialism: Plate tectonics, Weather and climate



Miss A Niblett

Head of Selvey

Specialism: Population and urban environments



Mr J Pearce

Teacher of geography and ICT website co-ordinator

Specialism: Fieldwork



Mrs V Bull

Teacher of geography and in charge of Duke of Edinburgh

Specialism: Environmental geography

“The Geography department at Balcarras is one of the most professional yet friendly departments of the school with teachers who are very passionate about their subject and are very supportive of their students” Maddy Maguire- 3rd year student University of Reading

“Geography is an earthly subject, but a heavenly science.” Edmund Burke



Fin Maguire- Year 13- A2 Geography



Tell us about yourself?

I'm Fin Maguire and I started Balcarras Sixth form in September 2013 having been to the lower school. I studied Geography, Economics and History and am currently on a gap year.

Why do you think it is important to study geography?

Geography is essential because it is so globally relevant and applicable. It provides you with an understanding of not just the natural world and its processes, but also a grasp of how people live and work within it as you study both physical and human geography respectively. It is crucial that our generation has an awareness of this when considering the future of our planet and mankind and it is for this reason I believe geography is very important.

Why did you decide to study Geography at A-level?

One of the main reasons I chose to take geography on was that I was good at it! Underpinning that however was the fact it is a course where you are studying real world events and worldwide developments. I think sometimes what we learn in school can be too theoretically based. The reason geography is so unique and fascinating is that it constantly feels real, as you learn topical case studies ranging from the conduct of tobacco corporations in the developing world, to the debate on climate change involving the controversial opinions of scholars such as Bjorn Lomborg. The real world application of the course was one of the main reasons I decided to study it.

What other subjects did you study and did they complement each other?

I study History and Economics alongside Geography. I specifically chose these as they do complement each other, and I find it beneficial to bring in aspects of these different academic spheres to achieve a broader perspective in class. For example, on the Human side, we study population change, and I was able to incorporate aspects of my History course in terms of British population change during the industrial revolution. We also study development and globalisation, which has significant connections with Economics.

What is the best thing about the course?

In my opinion, the best thing about the course is the variation. You can't get bored or find something repetitive easily when you are shifting from studying Antarctica to the slums of Mumbai!

Why should somebody who is thinking about geography as an A-level option pick it?

It offers you a wide array of excellent career prospects and opportunities. Geography is challenging and extremely well respected by both universities and employers- it isn't just colouring in maps! Depending on what interests you, as the course is so large and diverse, you could go into business, finance, urban planning, real estate, sustainability, architecture, law, international development, marketing, climatology, geology... There are so many potential areas you could pursue.

"I can't understand why men make all this fuss about Everest - it's only a mountain"- Junko Tabei

Fieldwork

Fieldwork is a fundamental aspect of geography which we are fully committed to delivering. The pupils have access to fieldwork opportunities throughout their A-level studies. In addition every two years we run a foreign residential trip and have been to Iceland, the West Coast of America and Italy in recent years. As part of the AS pupils must undertake two compulsory days of geographical field work which covers both human and physical geography. At A2 level pupils must complete a further two days to give four in total. Pupils will need to within the course collect and collate data which will form part of their independent investigation worth 20% of the full A-level.

We currently have around 80 students studying A-level geography (AQA). A-level Geography is also popular option amongst external candidates and the department do everything to ensure all pupils have smooth transition for them in from Year 11 in to Year 12. We currently study the AQA specification. The department embarked on the new specifications starting from 2016 and we are following the AQA syllabus.

Entry requirements:

Grade 6 at full course GCSE-level in geography.

The department

The department is dedicated to instilling a love of geography and to helping all pupils achieve their maximum potential, whatever their stage of education. The department comprises of 4 classrooms including a dedicated teaching room equipped with 20 computers for use within the department alongside specialised software packages and GIS. Each staff member in the department has an Ipad and apple TV within their classrooms and we have a bank of Ipads to use within lessons. All four classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and projectors.

Structure of the course

A-level

Component 1	Physical Geography	2 ½ hours	96 marks	40% of A-level
Component 2	Human Geography	2 ½ hours	96 marks	40% of A-level
Component 3	Geographical investigation	3,000–4,000 words	35 marks	20% of A-level

Year 12 topics:

- Coastal Landscapes
- Hazards
- Changing Places

Year 13 topics:

- Water and Carbon Cycles
- Global Systems and Global Governance
- Population and the Environment

"Most geography students are numerate, literate, good team workers, can think analytically and critically, have cultural agility, are socially and environmentally aware, and wider experience as a result of fieldwork. Geographers have ability to integrate ideas effectively, problem solve, highly computer literate and creative"



*Olivia Williams- Year 13- A2
Geography*



Tell us about yourself?

I am currently at university studying Primary teaching. Whilst in the 6th form at Balcarras I studied A2 Geography as one of my three A-Level subjects. I have been at Balcarras since Year 7 so it was an easy decision for me to continue studying here for Sixth Form.

Why do you think it is important to study geography?

One of the most eye opening activities was when Mrs Lambert-Masters asked us to find an article in a newspaper that was not related to Geography – naturally, it was impossible, highlighting to all of us just how crucial geography is in to all aspects of life hence makes for a great subject to study at this high a level.

Why did you decide to study Geography at A-level?

Geography is remarkable for the way it covers so much about life – I chose the subject for the excitement of physical topics such as 'Tectonics' as well as the educational human topics like 'Population' that can really change how you view the world and your place in it.

What other subjects did you study and did they complement each other?

I am also studying English Literature and Psychology. The study of people is certainly a strong link between these topics as well as key skills such as analysis of both text and data, essential across the subjects.

What was the best thing about the course?

As cliched as it may sound, the numerous trips throughout the two years have been so useful for really putting our knowledge to the test in a real life situation outside the classroom. (The memory of these trips are also incredibly useful when it comes to exams!)

Why should somebody who is thinking about geography as an A-level option pick it?

The geography department are one of the strongest in the school, going above and beyond to help you achieve the grade you deserve: revision sessions morning, noon and night; trips to cement knowledge and an enthusiastic approach to everything they do. I highly recommend geography as an A-Level because I guarantee you will look forward to every lesson while learning valuable, life-long skills.

“Money is like muck, not good unless spread” - Francis Bacon

Famous Geographers



Geography student is Prince William (the Duke of Cambridge) of the United Kingdom who studied geography at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland; having switched from studying the history of art. It might not be too long before a geographer becomes the King of England!



Matthew Pinsent and James Cracknell both studied Geography before winning Olympic gold medals!!



Nick Hodgson the drummer from the Kaiser Chiefs studied geography at the University of Leeds



David Ellery was a Premiership and FIFA referee. He studied Geography and taught it for many years at Harrow



Chris Tarrant studied Geography at the University of Birmingham before becoming one of the most recognisable faces on TV!!

“Geography is a broad based academic degree which is well respected by employers. Geography graduates have one of the highest rates of graduate employment” RGS

Careers in Geography

Geographers enter a very wide range of career areas and put simply there is no such thing as a geography job, there are jobs that geographers do. Studying geography provides you with valuable skills and a firm base for life-long learning.

Geographical Techniques

Geographical information systems give geographers the electronic tools to show a range of data on maps to analyse and help us understand changing patterns in both the natural and human landscape. With increasing domestic and commercial applications of electronic mapping software and GPS gadgets, people are becoming more aware of the potential of this sector. There are a wide range of interesting jobs in the UK and abroad.

At university and in subsequent employment you will need to be able to demonstrate good interpersonal skills, communication and teamwork. In addition a keen interest in cartography and good all round graphical and technical skills, you will need an interest in data handling and interpretation, fine attention to detail and the ability to self motivate and carry out independent research and decision making.

Today, GIS is routinely used by a wide variety of public and private-sector employers ranging from specialised large employers such as the Ordnance Survey, through to small independent GIS companies with just a few employees. Plentiful opportunities exist with national government departments (The Civil Service), the military, energy and water suppliers, retail companies and local councils.

The following areas are popular choices for geographers with a Geographical Techniques specialism

- GIS specialist (Geographical Information Systems)
- Census data specialist
- Location analyst
- Cartographer
- Surveyor
- Military GIS specialist
- Remote sensing analyst
- Geomatics software designer
- CAD technician
- Aerial surveyor

Do you enjoy map work and using software such as Google Earth™?

How I got here
I studied sciences and geography at A Level. I went to university in Edinburgh where I studied Zoology. My work has taken me to various parts of the world including periods in Mexico, Ethiopia (above) and in the UK at London Zoo. I am about to start a PhD in geography and zoology.

What my job entails
In my job my company provides information to insurance companies about potential risks to people and property in areas prone to hurricanes and earthquake damage. Using GIS and spatial information risk management companies supply insurers with specialist information regarding the likely risk of insuring a certain area or resource. I use my spatial knowledge and skills of analysis to understand habitat and migration patterns of animal populations.

How I use my geographical skills
Spatial mapping, GIS, data analysis and remote sensing are all crucial – they allow me to make a bridge with my work on animal populations. Using GIS and satellite tracking helped me to write a report on wolf populations in Ethiopia. The PhD will be a new challenge requiring more fieldwork and IT skills.

What I love about geography
Geography armed me with the right knowledge and tools to get an understanding of the world outside of your own environment, so important in a rapidly changing and global world.

George, Hurricane and Earthquake Risk Analyst

Development and Global Issues

The challenges of global peace and security, economic and social development, human rights, humanitarian issues and international law offer a demanding yet fulfilling career area for geographers. In our increasingly interconnected world this sector is a core employment area for geographers.

As geography is so broad and inter-related, project management makes good use of the wide ranging skills and knowledge. Ability or enthusiasm for languages, good report writing, skills in presentation and communication will be developed as part of a university course. For some posts you would need to command confidence and be outgoing with good networking skills. For all roles in this field empathy and cultural tolerance plus a desire to embrace new experiences are essential.

The following career areas are popular choices in this sector:

- Aid worker
- Charity fundraiser
- Charity Officer
- Civil Servant for DFID
- Armed forces
- HIV education officer
- Human rights officer
- International charity fundraising
- Refugee and asylum adviser
- Economic adviser and analyst
- United Nations terrorism prevention officer
- Diplomat
- British council cultural exchange manager
- VSO (Voluntary service overseas)
- 'OAP' project worker

Do you have a genuine interest in global affairs and a real passion to make a difference?

How I got here
I took geography plus two other subjects at A Level and then studied geography at UCL where I became interested in political and environmental geography. After graduating I worked as a Personal Assistant for a director of a national charity, before applying to DEFRA.

What my job entails
I am involved in all aspects of the government's international work with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Sustainable Development Programme. I help organise meetings, write speeches and prepare briefings; working closely with ministers of the government. The UNSDP is based in New York and the UNEP is in Nairobi, so I have recently been abroad at high level policy meetings as part of my job. I have also worked on European Union sustainable development strategy in Brussels.

How I use my geographical skills
Geography has given me a great background when working with other nations - knowing something about global trade and global issues is an advantage when negotiating policy with the EU or UN. I feel that I have really used my geography degree to help with my work, and am now also studying part-time for a masters degree at the geography department at Kings College, London. The course is called 'Environment, Politics and Globalisation', which is perfect for the job I am doing now.

What I love about geography
I love the diversity of Geography. To illustrate this - my three best friends are from university. We all studied geography together. We are each following very different career paths but all using our geography - one in social exclusion work, one in refugee and asylum work and one in education. Different dreams, different paths, same core subject.

Tania, Civil Servant for DEFRA: UN Strategy Branch

Environment & Sustainability

Do you care about the future of the planet? Are you interested in green issues?

The following Environment and sustainability jobs are popular with geographers

- Environmental campaign organiser
- Civil servant for DEFRA (Department for the environment, food and rural affairs)
- Conservation worker
- Environmental health officer
- Architect or urban planner for sustainable projects
- Environmental engineer
- Landscape architecture
- Pollution analyst
- Cycle route planner
- Recycling officer
- Forestry manager
- SSSI warden
- Environmental consultant
- Environmental impact officer for oil or quarrying company

At a time of growing concern about climate change, shrinking energy resources and desire for sustainable solutions geography is one of the most relevant courses you could choose to study. Often the top media story of the day, the environment has moved centre stage to the heart of local, national and international affairs.

Geographers are well placed to contribute to the scientific and political debate about the causes, implications and solutions in this area. Perhaps more than any other subject specialists they have the ability to oversee and manage projects in this area - this comes from the breadth of the subject and the global perspective that geographers have.

How I use my geographical skills
Geography is a multidisciplinary subject - a really interesting mix across arts and science. It has given me the freedom to move around within the subject and follow my interests. A range of problem solving skills plus an understanding of what the issue looks like from a range of perspectives has helped me present the climate change issue, through different media to different audiences.

What I love about geography
It gives me the ability to debate and discuss in a knowledgeable way around contemporary issues like climate change. Geography has given me a mandate to do anything! Interviews and writing.

How I got here
There was always a good atmosphere in geography at school - a relaxed and open minded approach to geography encouraged me. My interest in climate change started with glacial and mountain landscapes. Learning about retreating glaciers got me interested in the warming climate and how this reflects human activity; climate change is very much a social issue. After A Levels I took a geography degree and worked in publishing before coming here to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures & Commerce.

What my job entails
I am Director of Carbon Limited, we are concerned with policy innovations around engaging individuals and citizens in tackling climate change. Our project is developing ideas for introducing a personal carbon allocation, which would give each of us an incentive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I have to do quite a bit of persuading in my job, meeting people, talking climate change seriously. I argue for public engagement through lectures and speeches, radio interviews and writing.

Mark, Director of Carbon Limited at the RSA

Geography Alumni



Maddy Maguire- University of Reading



Tell us about yourself?

My name is Madeleine Maguire and I left Balcarras in June 2012 where I achieved A* A* B in Geography, Art and Mathematics. I am now in my final year at The University of Reading with a graduate position secured in London for September 2015.

Why do you think it is important to study geography?

As geographers you are taught a wide-ranging combination of skills and the subject offers an opportunity to learn about people, economies, cultures and the physical environment. Geography also provides you with vast knowledge and transferable skills that will inevitably advance you professionally and maximise your employability.

Why did you decide to study Geography at A-level?

The Geography department at Balcarras is one of the most professional yet friendly departments of the school with teachers who are very passionate about their subject and are very supportive of its students. The aim has always been to succeed whilst genuinely enjoying the subject. You are encouraged to learn for your general educational benefit as opposed to simply passing an exam.

What other subjects did you study and did they complement each other?

Geography combines well with both arts and science subjects. I studied Mathematics and Art alongside Geography A-level. These subjects complimented each other very well, as there is a certain level of statistics required in geography skills that is covered in Maths if you take the statistic option. By combining these three subjects I had a balance between essays, numbers and creativity which worked well for me as I do not like doing too much of the same thing.

What are you doing now and did your Geography help?

I graduated from The University Of Reading as a Chartered Surveyor. I have secured a job at Savills in London to obtain my professional qualifications. Geography in general helped hugely with specific modules throughout university such as Urban Economics and Globalization. Human Geography in particular aided me with global knowledge of the urban environment, which assisted me in my essays during university.

Geography Alumni



Jodie Threadingham-Wasley- 1st
Geography UofG

1. Quick overview- tell us about yourself

I studied at Balcarras during 2009-2016 where success in my Business studies and Geography A-Levels enabled me to pursue my desired geography degree, opening up a world of opportunities for me.

Having graduated with a 1st in Geography (BSc Hons) from the University of Gloucestershire, I am currently aiming to attend Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in January in consideration of hopefully passing the Army Officer selection board in November 2019.

2. How did you get where you are now? A-levels, degree, travelling, jobs?

Being in this position not only required lots of hard work and commitment but also a lot of debating as to what I wanted to do as a career. This, of course, is a normal feat, and not originally having an idea allowed me to explore which hobbies and interests I would like to pursue including which modules caught my attention.

My degree was very flexible allowing for opportunity to choose between human or physical modules or simply a mixture of both. University acted as a sieve filtering out the topics I didn't like, leaving those I wouldn't mind a career in. There was plenty of opportunity for practical work experience including the chance to work with SWECO, a developmental organisation, when determining the environmental and ecological effects of the re-routing of a busy dual carriageway and thus forming mitigation proposals in light of these.

It was during my dissertation project I realised my love for travel and adventure after living in a hammock within a Honduran rainforest for 6 weeks. Not only did I manage to learn how to collect and identify large mammal tracks and signs, but I was given the opportunity to learn life skills such as; setting up a hammock, cooking within the jungle and I even managed to climb a 160ft tree into the forest canopy using ropes. More importantly, the data I collected here was used and dispatched to the Honduran government for conservation purposes. One scheme in particular was the Natural Forest Standard (NFS) who deals with delegating how much the forest is worth in terms of carbon credits. This appealed to me as a geographer because what I was taught about carbon credits in school simply came to life in real world practice.

3. How has geography influenced or how have you used geography in your life/job/career

When deciding which career path to follow, it was important for me to tick off a certain set of criteria: the job must involve travel, use of a physical skill, a geography degree and must be something I would feel proud of doing. That's where Army Officer came in. As an Officer, data analysis, current affairs and a general understanding of human and physical geography are crucial for effecting decision making and leadership. More applicably, the corps I am interested in joining is the Royal Engineers, whom in one circumstance have active involvement in distributing humanitarian aid to disaster hit countries. As a geographer understanding the processes underlying a countries development, having an active involvement in the recovery of a nation proves very exciting and should enable me to do my job efficiently to support each aspect of the affected environment.

Within the Corps of Royal Engineers, I am particularly interested in joining 42 Geographic Engineer regiment. This regiment draws upon the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to produce mapping support to those in the field detailing information ranging from; locating the best routes, using satellite imagery to locate enemy hostilities, to optimum locations for a new helicopter landing site. This role will use transferable skills taught through geography including; data acquisition and analysis, presentation/communication of findings and ability to think outside the box. In conjunction with these skills, geographical knowledge of geology, meteorology and ecological processes are combined to ensure suitable, correct decisions.

Geography Alumni



Sam Reynolds- Masters degree- Climate change science- Bristol University campus

1. Tell us about yourself

At the moment I am studying a masters degree in Climate Change Science and Policy at Bristol University and am currently writing my dissertation looking at how climate change will affect flooding the lower River Severn Catchment. I am using the latest climate change data produced by the Met Office for the UK, called UKCP18, and carrying out statistical flood frequency analysis to run a hydraulic flood model called LISFLOOD-FP, that was developed here at Bristol University. So far my results tell me that as expected, flooding in the UK is likely to increase by the end of the century.

2. How did you get where you are now? A-levels, degree, travelling, jobs?

After leaving Balcarras I took a gap year and went travelling around South East Asia with my girlfriend, before going to Cardiff University to study Earth and Environmental Science. As I'm sure you can tell, geography has pretty much been central in everything I've done so far! The diversity of geography and the broad knowledge base and range skills I learnt at GCSE and A-Level have been consistently useful since I left school. I was always more interested in physical geography rather than human geography, but the more you study the subject you realise just how closely linked they are.

3. How has geography influenced/used geography in your life/job/career:

Studying in Cardiff was amazing and I was lucky enough to go on three residential field trips to Snowdonia, The Netherlands and Switzerland (which is the photo I have included of me on top of the Rhone Glacier!). I also studied a huge range of topics including geomorphology, glaciation, Geographical Information Systems, marine ecology, environmental management and geology, to name a few. For my undergraduate dissertation I spent a summer surveying the River Chelt as it passes through Cheltenham, before simulating discharges through my cross sections in a model, to determine how climate change could alter the flood hazard in Cheltenham, it was also nominated for the British Hydrological Society Student Award, which I'm quite proud of. But it was learning about climate change in such great detail that made me want to study it further in Bristol. As I am about to finish my masters, I am looking at getting a job in a climate change related field, such as an environmental or low-carbon energy consultant, or with the Environment Agency, but I am still undecided on exactly what I want to do. I just know it has to be environmental/geography related.

I genuinely always tell people my geography teachers at Balcarras were a big inspiration for doing what I've done. I even very nearly decided to do a PGCE in geography instead of my current masters to become a geography teacher! But I highly recommend studying a geography related degree after A-Levels, I had such a good time in Cardiff and it opens up so many doors to finding employment afterwards.

Is geography for me?

As you get closer to narrowing down your options, you should think about a few things. This applies just as well to any subject, not just Geography.

Step 1: Most important - do you enjoy it?

If you enjoy a subject you will work harder and be more attentive. That will lead to a happier couple of years, and a better grade at the end of it. If you enjoy several subjects, go to step 2...

Step 2: Are you good at it?

If you have several subjects you enjoy, think about which ones you are best at. Remember though, that if you haven't done well recently it doesn't mean you won't do better next year, especially as the people in your group will change which may help you concentrate better. If you are still struggling, go to step 3...

Step 3: The Department

If you haven't made your decisions based on Steps 1 and 2 (and even if you have), take a look at the department you will be working in. Every subject has huge strengths, and you need to decide which are appropriate for you. You can also think about the classrooms, access to technology, and the staff - but see the word of warning in Step 5!

Step 4: What will you study next year - is it interesting?

You might find Geography more interesting than you thought - from global issues like climate change and fighting poverty, right down to why you live in your house and why there isn't a cinema nearby, geography is an interesting subject. Remember also that some new subjects that sound fabulously exciting might not turn out the way you think they will. This brings us on to the next point...

Step 5: The teachers

You might want to study with the same teacher for the next two years. Or you might want to get away from one you have at the moment! But don't let this be something that influences your decision to do any particular subject. Remember that teachers are unlikely to teach all the groups in your year for GCSE, and even if they do, in all subject areas teachers move on from time to time.

Whatever you decide, make sure it is the right subject for you. The Geography Department naturally wants you ALL to do Geography because we think it is the most important subject you could take (where else will you learn about global warming, rainforest destruction, shopping patterns and coastal erosion?) but we also want you to make the right decision. Ask us at *any time* if you want more advice.