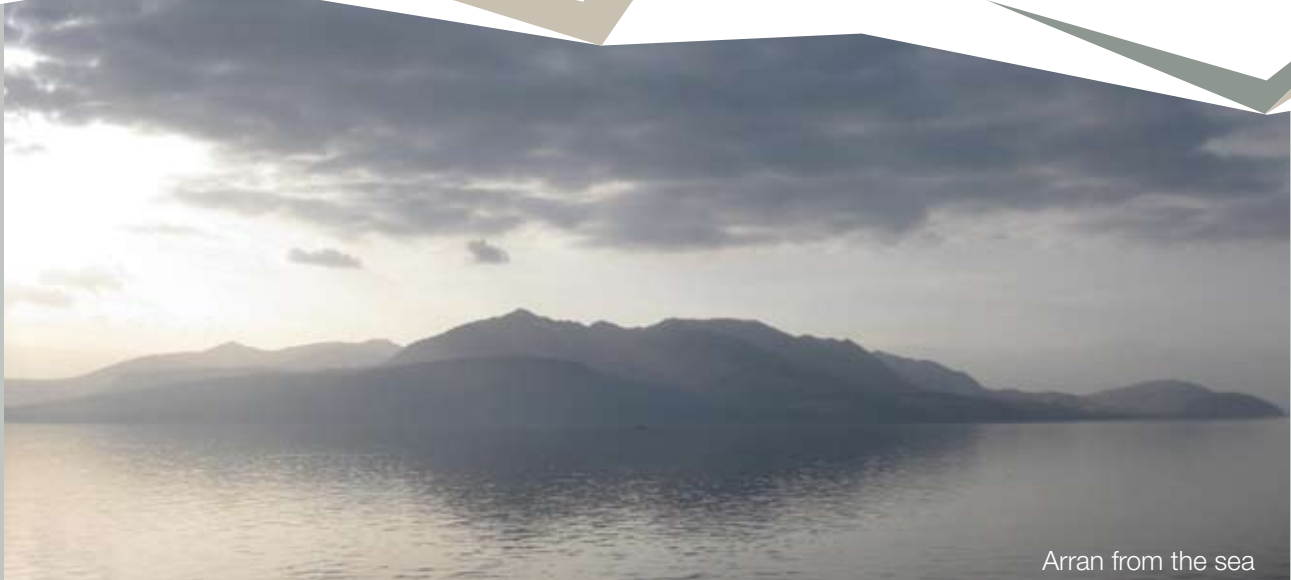


# Arran Fieldtrip

by Fred Richards, 2nd-year undergraduate



Arran from the sea

Bright and early on a mid-April morning a bleary-eyed, motley crew of freshers embarked on the 10 hour slog up the M6 to Scotland: land of geology and abundant precipitation. Upon arrival in Arran, weary and drained from the journey, we poured out of the minibuses and into the rooms that would be our homes for the next ten days. By the time dinner had been eaten and the evening briefing had been attended, the prospect of the impending nine days of early wake-ups, long days in the field, and general effort was not particularly attractive. However, we were all pleasantly surprised with our time in Arran (and not just by the tans we acquired)!

There were lows - determining grain size of yet another non-descript grey (or red if you were lucky) rock grew a little tiresome - but they were far outweighed by the highs: beautiful sunshine, stunning landscape and inspired geology puns courtesy of Dr. Mac Niocaill ("one might even call this sandstone an "Arran"-ite" - cue groans). The mapping and general geologising, of course, took up large portions of our time; however the good humour and resourcefulness of the staff, in conjunction with the benevolence of the weather, made these tasks both enjoyable and interesting. Moments of hilarity punctuated each day's work whether it was Ben's insistence that he'd seen a mountain crab, or Ed having to be physically restrained from hammering Hutton's Unconformity.

Besides the work, there were plenty of other distractions and memorable moments. The trips to

the distillery and the brewery were much appreciated, as were, for the more intrepid amongst us, the opportunities to climb/crawl up Goatfell and "straight-line" various other more modest peaks. The nightlife was surprisingly vibrant as well!

All in all the trip was a resounding success and a big thanks needs to be given to all the members of staff that came along; their help and their patience were invaluable. In particular, the fact that Dr. Mac Niocaill managed to resist the urge to give up on us after the question "...and what rock is this?" was met with blank, empty expressions for the umpteenth time was highly commendable.



Despite our occasional lapses in enthusiasm we actually managed to learn a lot. The opportunity to map an area relatively unsupervised and observe in the field fossils and sedimentary structures that most of had only seen grainy pictures of in lectures was particularly instructive.

Fieldwork and field training are central to the undergraduate course. It is only through extensive field teaching that students develop the knowledge and understanding that are needed to solve the enormous range of problems that the natural world presents.

This aspect of the course is, however, increasingly difficult to sustain, and we thank those Alumni that generously contribute towards these costs.