

Trip to Ram's Island

World Wetlands Day is held on 2nd February every year. To celebrate this, the Antrim Grammar Biology Department took part in a Rams Island clean up event on Saturday 4th February. Mrs Calvert, William Gawn and I travelled to Sandy Bay, where we were met by a group of around 20 dedicated environmentalists who were happy to give up their spare time for such a worthwhile cause. After a ten minute journey to the island, we were given a brief tour by Michael, who is a volunteer and runs the *Island Warrior* boat to Rams Island.



During the course of the tour, he showed us the various landmarks on the island such as the tower, the barge visitor's centre and the O'Neil summer house. Michael also explained the various problems that they have there mainly due to invasive species and pollution.

After a short tea break and chat (mostly people asking William about how he comes from Spain), we were all given the necessary equipment (although some professionals had their own!) and we all travelled to different parts of the island. Originally William and I stayed with Mrs Calvert but we quickly lost her in the dense foliage. After a litter picking session, we returned at the designated time to have lunch, where a stew or soup dish was kindly provided.

With our stomachs full, the group set about collecting more litter from different parts of the island which had not been covered yet. The litter mainly gets to the island by washing up on the shore, after having found its way into Lough Neagh. This is a never ending problem for the volunteers and this kind of litter picking event is held at least once every year, if not several times.

William and I lost Mrs Calvert (again!) after returning to the barge to get more rubbish bags. We quickly realised that they filled up quickly with the various bits of litter. Some interesting things we found included: a hacksaw, a propeller, some corrugated iron from a roof and a shocking amount of shotgun shells.



I think it's safe to say that we were all shocked by the amount of rubbish we collected in the end. As Mrs Calvert said, we weren't finding very much at the beginning as we just accepted the litter as a normal feature on the ground but once we got into the litter finding "mood", we kept finding bits of it everywhere.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thanks the organisers of the event and Mrs Calvert for the great day that was had by all. There was a great turnout and I hope Antrim Grammar participates in this event in the future.



Paige Havlin