

Constructionarium 2011: building bridges in the Norfolk sunshine!

Mayday bank holiday Mondays are usually for spending in the garden or doing some DIY, catching up with family, maybe having a barbecue and enjoying the early May sunshine. Not for Professor Lawrence Coates, Dr Alex Royal and 29 intrepid undergraduates: Monday 2nd May beckoned and they were all ready to go to Constructionarium, held at the Construction Skills site in Norfolk, for a week.



Constructionarium is a hands-on experience for civil engineering students to build a 1/10th scale structure and in 2011, Birmingham University students had their first experience of this wonderful opportunity, thanks to Birse Rail engineers who provided both consulting and contracting expertise. The staff and students stayed in en-suite accommodation eating three cooked meals per day to gain the energy required to build 10th scale models of the Millau Viaduct in France and the Kingsgate Bridge in Durham.

The week started off with bright sunshine, a metrological theme which continued until the final push for completion of the projects, on Saturday 7th May. Working against the clock throughout and, with the help of some healthy competition between the two teams, the 3rd year M.Eng project managers, Ian McNicholas and Andy Robson, shared resources to complete their respective bridges on time.



From Constructionarium, engineer Tony Millican was impressed with how the project managers encouraged their teams to achieve results usually expected of larger groups. First year student, Matthew Everett, commented, "I had a thoroughly enjoyable time and have learnt an awful lot that will help in the future. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to participate" and from Rosannagh Lydon (2nd year), the simple comment, "lots of theory now makes a lot of sense".

This exercise is also an example of what Alumni can achieve. Birmingham graduates Simon Moon and John Stiles are now senior engineers within Birse Rail and were able to assist us in achieving the support from the company. The senior contractor, Paul Barrett, was mightily impressed by the determination and professionalism of the students and complimented them on their achievement. He also had a lot of fun and can't wait to come back next year!



The trip was made possible thanks to essential financial support won from the University's Alumni [Circles of Influence](#) fund and the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences.