



class act

advertisement feature



Fishkeeping might be a relaxing hobby enjoyed by millions of people in Britain, but to Ben Helm, lecturer in Aquatic Studies at Brooksby College, it's also a subject for serious study.

Ben Helm is determined that when his students leave Brooksby they will have the knowledge and experience, not just to be a successful fishkeeper, but also to secure a good career in aquatics.

Like many youngsters, Ben developed a passion for fishkeeping in his early teens, going on to take a BSc. in Marine Biology and Applied Zoology at Bangor University. From university Ben worked for many years in the ornamental fish industry – invaluable experience, he says, which also showed him the importance of having a business-like approach to aquatics. It is this combination of a passion for fishkeeping and a sound commercial awareness which, today Ben Helm instills into his students at Brooksby.

Brooksby College is a beautiful 18th century hunting manor set in 800 acres of rolling farmland, 10 miles outside Leicester. Of the 450 full time students at Brooksby, there are now 60 studying a variety of aquatic courses, from a one year diploma, (for which the only qualification is a genuine interest in fishkeeping), to a Higher National Diploma, with a possible extension to a BSc. degree.

The facilities at Brooksby are impressive by any standard, with a major ongoing investment programme, a high proportion of which has

recently been spent on new facilities for the aquatic courses. The new centre for ornamental fish, for example, was designed, built and is now being extended by students on the course.

"Real hands-on experience," says Ben, "which is a very important part of the tuition we offer".

College Vice-Principal Tony Gray sees the aquatic course as being a real success story for Brooksby – and for Ben. "The reaction from the aquatics industry has been amazing and companies are literally queuing up to take our students, either as part of their work experience or when they complete their course". Students at Brooksby study a wide range of subjects on the science and practise of keeping and breeding fish – including, of course, fish nutrition. "The students enjoy feeding Aquarian" and all the ornamental fish at Brooksby are fed on Aquarian" says Ben.

"Teaching good practise, as well as good science, is very important, and from my experience, as a hobbyist and a professional fishkeeper, I know that I can rely on the nutritional quality of Aquarian". As an academic I can vouch for the nutritional excellence of Aquarian" – and as a hobbyist I know that my fish have always thrived on Aquarian".



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