

ALUMNI STORIES

Dr Luke Helmer

Restoration Science Officer. Visiting Researcher – University of Portsmouth & University of Southampton

Dr Luke Helmer was a student at Worthing College between 2009 and 2012. Here he tells us a bit about what he is doing now, his journey to become a Marine Biologist and his time at Worthing College.

What are you doing now?

My primary role is as a marine biologist, working as the Restoration Science Officer for Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE). My work currently involves a whole range of aspects focused around habitat restoration. Predominantly specialising in oysters, we have recently begun an integrated project looking at restoring oysters, saltmarsh, seagrass and kelp at a landscape scale. I am leading a feasibility study to determine if the lessons we have learnt in the Solent can be applied to a similar project in Dubai. Closer to home I am part of a team researching the potential of UK windfarms as restoration sites. My experience in the field has also meant that I was invited to be an editor for the Native Oyster Habitat Restoration Handbook that has recently been published, I am also an editor and author on a range of other handbooks due for release in 2021. In addition to my main role I am on the Scientific Committee for the Native Oyster Restoration Alliance (NORA), a European network of restoration projects.

Which local schools did you go to?

Thomas A Becket First and Middle, Durrington High School and then Worthing College

What subjects did you study at Worthing?

Biology (AS/A2), Chemistry (AS/A2), Geology (AS/A2), Geography (AS).

What was your best experience about college?

The ability to integrate sports and social elements into academic studies to maintain mental and physical wellbeing.

What's the one piece of advice you would give to your 16-year-old self?

You don't deserve it, you have to earn it. Keep pushing and fighting to do what you really want to do and don't settle for a path that you don't want to go down....it will be worth it in the end. This would have been particularly useful on the day that I received my results. As this was the year that the tuition fees increased from £3000 to £9000 a year, all the grade requirements were harsher and everyone applied to go to university. I didn't get the results I needed and this was the worst day of my academic life. But I knew what I wanted to do and after another year at college I got accepted onto the marine biology degree...I now have my dream job and am a Dr after having completed seven years of study at university.

“Worthing College provided me with the foundational knowledge to proceed to University in a manner that allowed me to thrive and achieve my ambitions.”

