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Student's Antarctic research makes mark on postage stamps

An image of a Scottish student working in Antarctica features in a new set of stamps.

Damon Davies, a postgraduate GeoSciences student at the University of Edinburgh, appears in one of four new British Antarctic Territory postage stamps.

The set, issued for the start of the Antarctic summer, will be on sale at British research stations in Antarctica and the Falkland Islands.

They highlight a science project known as the Ice Sheet Stability Programme, or iSTAR. Its objective is to improve understanding of ice loss in the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, where some glaciers are losing ice at a faster rate than it is being replaced.

New knowledge about this is critical for making better predictions of the response of the ocean and ice to environmental change, and future sea levels.

The six-year, £7.4 million programme is funded by the Natural Environment Research Council. It involves researchers from Edinburgh alongside 10 other UK universities and the British Antarctic Survey.

The photo of Mr Davies which appears on a 75p stamp was taken on a previous trip. It shows the student working on a surface radar used to investigate the internal properties of ice on a glacier. During this trip, Edinburgh researchers took part in a large-vehicle traverse over deep snow. This involved towing an ice-penetrating radar more than 2000km, capturing images of the landscape and sub-glacial material beneath ice 2km thick.

Mr Davies has returned to Antarctica for a second iSTAR traverse, which runs until January. He said: "I'm thrilled to be featured on one of the stamps produced for the 2014/2015 Antarctic summer. Being part of the iSTAR programme has been an exciting and rewarding experience for me and it's great that the efforts of everyone involved in this important research are being commemorated."

Antarctic summer temperatures can drop to -20 Celsius, with high winds and thick snow.

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