Sussex machine saves sight

A revolutionary eye testing device, discovered here at Sussex, is now being used by a hospital in Surrey – thanks to the efforts of local fund raisers. Mayday University Hospital, which is already among world leaders in fighting blindness in young people, now has a machine that allows doctors to spot any early signs of eye deterioration in diabetics, the biggest single cause of blindness in the developed world.

The money for the equipment, which is called the Tritan Discrimination Sensitivity Test, was raised by the Purley Diabetes Association, which learned about it from Dilo de Alwis, an eye consultant from the hospital and one of the team working on the project at Sussex. They were determined that they should have it for their area.

“We’re only a small organisation,” said Barry Corbett, the association spokesman, “but the chance to do so much good seemed irresistible, so we went to Purley Rotary and they agreed to help us.” The Rotary organised a swimathon this February and raised over £9,000.

The two-minute test, which was discovered by accident, can also help patients with multiple sclerosis and thyroid problems. According to Dr Lionel Ripley (ENoG) who led the team who developed the test: “We were actually working on an eye test for multiple sclerosis patients when Dilo pointed out that early detection could also help doctors fighting to prevent diabetics going blind.”

The test requires patients to look at a TV screen displaying blue and yellow stripes and the lines are gradually faded until they become invisible. The threshold at which this is reached determines the extent of eye deterioration.

Putting tickling to the test

Tickling can stunt growth. At least that was the conclusion drawn by Gail Taylor (pictured above), Lecturer in Plant Biology (BIOLS). When Meridian TV’s Put it to the Test asked Gail to put on trial an ancient theory, that touch affects plants, she was surprised to find that it worked.

The phenomenon, which is known as thigmomorphogenesis, was originally proposed by Theophrastus in 300BC. Gail has found that plants react to touch in quite specific and predictable ways. For example if you stroke certain plants on their stalks ten times a day their vertical growth is stunted while their stalks grow thicker.

“Plants don’t have a nervous system like animals, but they do still have control over themselves” explained Gail. “Physical stimuli affect their enzymes, which ultimately act as catalysts or triggers in the plants’ development and growth”.

Perhaps one day people will perfect the fine art of plant stroking in an attempt to make their plants yield more fruit. After all, the runner beans featured above grew to be short but very bushy, thus producing more beans. The programme is due to be broadcast in the New Year.
CPES new recruit, Mark Dinnin, pictured above, is a Forest fan with a genuine interest in forests. Being a lecturer in physical geography he is particularly partial to a ramble amongst the wildlife. Walking gives me a chance to learn all about the local geology, the natural landscape and archaeology."

Mark comes to us from the University of Hull’s School of Geography and Earth Resources. Since arriving at Sussex last month he has become very fond of Brighton. “Brighton’s great. And the University has a good atmosphere. The students are high quality and the University produces excellent research.” His own present research involves looking at very old, dead beetles. Or more specifically “using fossil insect remains to reconstruct past environments,” he explained. “And we can use our knowledge of ecology to infer the contemporary environment of fossil insects.”

Student Discipline

Members and employees of the University are reminded that all students are obliged to abide by the general provisions of the Ordinance on Student Discipline which says that: “Students shall maintain a standard of conduct which is not harmful to the work, good order or good name of the University.”

Under the Ordinance, all University members and employees are required to try to prevent any breach of University discipline and should report any such breach to the Registrar & Secretary. The Discipline Committee refers alleged breaches of discipline to the appropriate Dean for action (if minor) or to the Disciplinary Panel if considered to be a major breach.

Appeals

MEETING HOUSE CHRISTMAS APPEAL 1996 is for the Emmaus Community at the former St. Marye’s Convent, Portsdown for 35 homeless people (single and families). Emmaus is a self-sustaining community through work - recycling, refurbishing and selling donated goods and furniture – “offering a genuine route back into society as a contributor rather than a dependant on the State”. It is an international organisation with 350 self-sufficient secular communities in 37 countries. If you would like to make a contribution please send it to Barbara Barber in the Meeting House (cheques should be made payable to The Meeting House Appeal 1996).

POVERTY AWARENESS DINNER, Tuesday 3 December, 6.00 - 7.30 p.m. in the AFRAS Common Room. Tickets, price £2.25, available from the AFRAS Reception Office. The ‘rich’ 5% will dine on soup, vegetarian chilli & rice, icecream, plus wine. The ‘middle classes’ will dine on vegetarian chilli & rice, plus a soft drink. The ‘poor’ will just get rice and water. The proceeds will be divided equally between Brighton’s homeless, ROKPA in Tibet and ROKPA in Nepal. ROKPA is also asking for your clean, spare blankets, sleeping bags, and any warm clothing, to be delivered to Saska Neary, Student Community Action, 1st Floor of Falmer House. These items will then be delivered by ROKPA to Brighton’s homeless. ROKPA is organising a Quiz Night on Monday 9 December from 7.30 to 10.00 pm in the Falmer Bar. Tickets are 50p. Contact Louise Sargent, 01424 893084, SPRU p/g, or email sapd6@central.sussex.ac.uk

Nobel Visitor

The 1996 Nobel Laureate for Physics, Robert Richardson, visited Sussex this week en route for the award ceremony in Stockholm. During his week-long visit, Professor Richardson of Cornell University gave a talk to a combined meeting of the Physics and Astronomy Society and the Solid State and Materials Seminar on Some Aspects of Liquid Helium Three. He also spent time consulting with the Sussex research group, headed by Douglas Brewer and Low Thompson, which is engaged on research into superfluity. Professor Richardson was awarded this year’s Nobel Prize, with Professors David Lee and Douglas Osheroff, for the discovery of the superfuid transition of liquid helium three. He is pictured here with fellow Nobel prize winner Sir Harry Kroto.

Development Opportunities

Funding may be available from Staff Development for faculty to attend the following events. Please contact the Staff Development Officer, ext 3849 for details of these and other events.

Contrasting Approaches to International Education UKCOSA, London, 10 December 1996


Designing Modular Courses Oxford Centre for Staff Development, at Warwick, 11 December 1996


Staff Development On-site course

• Developing an academic career: Thursday 19 December 1996, all day, plus a follow-up day on 20 February 1997. This workshop is for contract research staff who are seeking to develop an academic career. To receive further information contact Alison Lynner, ext 3868.

• Social Science research funding: Wednesday 4 December 2 to 5.30pm. This course will be led by William Solesbury (ex ESRC) from William Solesbury Associates (Research Management Consultancy) and will consider strategies for maximising the effectiveness of applications for research funding. For further information, please contact Rose Mortenson on ext 3849 as soon as possible.
Review of Credits and Modularity

The Vice-Chancellor has set up a Working Party to undertake a systematic review of credit allocation, course shape and programme structure at the University. Such a review has become necessary, as well as desirable, with the recognition that since the University confirmed the move to modular programmes and approved the adoption of a system of credits for the University’s undergraduate programmes, the credit allocation system is both internally obscure and externally inexplicable.

The Working Party (chaired by the Academic Secretary, Ted Nakhe) hopes to propose flexible mechanisms to enable development of the curricula which will accommodate student transfer between programmes, Schools, and external institutions, new patterns of learning, and a changing student market, whilst retaining the distinctive nature of the research-led teaching of the University of Sussex.

The Working Party’s self-identified boundaries are to be concerned with (i) the structures of programmes and not their content, (ii) the proposal of solutions to anomalies in the credit framework, and (iii) the relationship of structures and practice at Sussex to the emerging national credit framework.

The Working Party intends to meet with Schools and other constituencies within the University, and with representatives of other institutions, to discuss what sorts of policies and mechanisms are necessary to achieve the original aims of modularity. A discussion document has been circulated to Deans, Subject Chairs and other interested parties. Copies of this discussion document may be obtained by contacting Mrs Rita Dare on ext. 3841.

The Working Party wishes to hear from as many viewpoints as possible and encourages individual contributions to its deliberations. These should be addressed to the Secretary to the Working Party, Jim Guild, in Sussex House or emailed to him at J.Guild@sussex.ac.uk. The deadline for individual submissions is 31 January 1997.

The Report of the Working Party will be circulated widely during the Summer Term 1997 for consideration by Subject Groups, Schools and central committees.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

This is a selection of Research Opportunities. More details of these and other opportunities are available from Mylène Powell in the Research Office; ext 3812 (mornings only); email: M.Powell@sussex.ac.uk; http://sussex.ac.uk (For staff, Research Funding).

THE PARTNERSHIP TRUST: Applications invited for the funding of a case materials centre. No closing date given.

INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA: The Royal Academy of Engineering's Senior Research Fellowships and Personal Research Chairs. To provide additional funds to support a senior researcher, or research professor, in a field of particular relevance to the sponsoring industrial company.

NERC ACADEMIC POSTS IN EARTH OBSERVATION: to stimulate a wider academic and teaching base with the ability to support the overall strategic objectives of the EOSTB. The increasing demand for cross-disciplinarity requires assimilation into EO of expertise from the physical and other sciences. No fixed closing dates.

THE LEVERHULME TRUST 1997 STUDY ABROAD STUDENTSHIPS: Tenable for 12 or 24 months for advanced study or research at a centre of learning in any part of the world except the UK and USA. Closing date: 6 January 1996.

NERC (CASE) RESEARCH STUDENTSHIPS IN EARTH OBSERVATION: to apply information systems knowledge to environmental issues. Closing date: 6 January 1996.

Poppy Appeal

The British Legion would like to thank all who helped and contributed to the campus appeal which raised £509.42.

Payroll Office

From Monday 2 December the Payroll Office will now be open from 10.00am to 4.00pm inclusive. Please note that on the final day before Christmas, December 20, it will be closed from 12-noon.

PDU on show

On Tuesday 3 December, the Photographic and Design Unit (PDU) in Arts C is holding an open-day to demonstrate its Electronic Imaging systems, including scanning, manipulation and printing. We will be available to show you our complete range of services from 10.00am to 4.30pm. No booking necessary – just come along to Arts C107 (ground floor).
What’s on...

**Monday 2 December**
- Analysis Seminar: Boundary integral formulation of structural acoustic coupling problems. S. Soroκin (St. Petersburg), Room PB1A.
- Particle Seminar: X-ray observations of the sun with Japan's Yohkoh spacecraft. L. Coulhan (Mullard Space Centre), Room PB 2A1.
- Language Group: Lips need tongues: some strange consonantal changes in Romance and Slavic. R. Coates, Room A155.
- Neuroscience Seminar: Neurotrophins and neurodegenerative diseases. D. Dawborn (Bristol Royal Infirmary), Biology Lecture Room.
- Women's Studies Graduate Seminar: (Re)productive fictions: reproduction and embodiment in the writing of Marge Piercy. J. Haran, Room D730.
- CPES Seminar: Explosions and explosives. Dr. R.C. Allgrove (Chichester College), MLST.

**Tuesday 3 December**
- SEI Seminar: European environmental policy, planning and SEA. D. Hill (Brighton), Room A71.
- COSGS Seminar: Consciousness from A to Z. S. Torrence (Middlesex), Room PB5C11.
- Culom Lecture: Performance: the oldest profession is not what you think: the craft of the story teller. A. Ramesden (Emerson College), Meeting House Quiet Room.
- Graduate Seminar in Media and Culture: 'Impartiality' and the 'fairness' doctrine: problems of regulation. S. Harvey (Sheffield Hallam), Room D440.
- German Research Colloquium: Reminiscences of the 1930s. W. and R. Ledermann, Room A155.
- Social Anthropology Graduate/Faculty Seminar: Cross-subjectivity in the making of heroic persons in West Bank Palestine during the Intifada. Dr. I. Jean-Klein (Edinburgh), Room A71.
- American Studies Open Seminar: The Kennedy assassination and the politics of paranoia. P. Knight (Nottingham), Room D730.

**Wednesday 4 December**
- IDS Seminar: Trust and economic development. J. Humphrey and H. Schmitz, IDS Room 221.
- CDE Occasional Workshop: Developing planning in SA: planning and institutional aspects of the Reconstruction and Development Programme. J. Blumenfeld (Brunel), EDB Room 205.
- Query - Lesbian and Gay Seminar: It's going to be more difficult than that: developing bisexual reading strategies. J. Eadie, Room D610.
- History of Art Work-in-Progress Seminar: Post-revolutionary Mexican muralism: rupture or continuity? N. Colby (Brighton Museum), Room A5.
- Engineering Colloquium: Hubris and the software engineer: learning to live with uncertainty in our software. Prof. B. Little wood (City University) Room ENGAG-A51.

**Thursday 5 December**
- Postgraduate History and Gender Seminar: Women's history and the national curriculum: an update (discussion). P. Owen, Room D730.
- Theoretical Physics Seminar: Fractal Dimensions and scaling laws in the interstellar medium: a field theory approach. H.I. de Vega (Paris) Room PB1A.
- Gender and Conflict Seminar: Towards complementarity in gender analysis. Dr. J. Large (CREATE), IDS 221.
- Experimental Psychology Seminar: Spatial representation in the brain: neuropsychological and computational approaches. C. Humphreys (Birmingham), Biology Lecture Room.
- History Work in Progress Seminar: Ancient laughter and renaissance philosophy. Q. Skinner (Christ's College, Cambridge), Room A155.

**Friday 6 December**
- Algebra Seminar: Metapost. R.A. Fenn, Portacabin 2, science car park.
- PRSU Seminar: Mad cows and Englishmen and the science policy. Dr. E. Milstone, EDB Room 121.
- Philosophy Society Meeting: Deceived by our genes? S. Wilkinson (Keele), Room A155.

**Language Centre**
- Were you unable to find a course at the beginning of the year? Sign up for weekly classes beginning after Christmas in: Latin for special purposes.
- German, Spanish, Italian beginners.
- French elementary for those with a basic knowledge. Please ask about other languages of interest to you.
- Contact Catherine x 2016.

**Miscellaneous**
- Concert of Modern American Music
- Migration Research Workshop
  - Friday 6 December: Southern Europe and the new immigrations. SEI Room A71. Workshop continues on Saturday 7 December. Convenor: R. King A162, ext. 8744. No fee but please let convenor know if you are coming, or contact L. Gerber, ext. 2022.
- Sports Fed Christmas Ball
  - Saturday 7 December: In the Refectory. Black tie. DJ Danny Inferno from Shakti at the Zap. Late bar. Tickets £10 - £12 non-Sports Federation members.

**The Meeting House**
- 6pm Thursday 5 December: Jewish magic and superstition. Rabbi Dr J. Colcock (Brighton and Hove New Synagogue), in the Quiet Room.

**The Gardener Arts Centre**
- Film at the Gardener
  - Sunday 1 December: 6pm Twister (pg)
  - Saturday 10 December: Tie me up, tie me down (18)
- 6.30pm A private function (15)
- Wednesday 4 December: 11.30pm Dead man (18)

**Small Ads**
- HOUSE TO LET: 3-bed, furnished house, 6 min. from university. Tel: 0181 209 1010.
- FOR SALE: Mahogany corner unit. Suit TV etc. Top opening to allow extra storage. £40. Cooper fire hood - suit Yorkshire fire place. £25. Electric 2 bar fire log effect vgc. £15. Wall unit/display cabinet, teak colour. 3 draws, large glass section and internal drinks cabinet, vgc. 5 long. £40. TV cabinet, large unit with doors to close over TV and drawer at bottom for video. £25. Computer table with sliding drawer for keyboard etc. Light grey. £30. Tel: 607 2198.
- TOYS AND BOOKS FOR SALE: Duplo, playmobile, mobilo, kidicraft roadway, wooden building bricks. sorting box, new crayons, books, puzzles and games. All in excellent condition, various prices. Tel: 553327.
- ANSWER MACHINE: for sale. With remote control. Still in box, cost £47. Bargain at £25. Contact adj.bratsco@sussex.ac.uk.
- IRONING BORED! Your ironing taken care of, in your own home, at times to suit, Hove/Brighton area. Reasonable rates. Contact x 8022.
- BABYSITTING PROBLEMS? Responsible graduate au-pair available to babysit in Brighton and Hove area, contact x 8022.

**Bulletin**
The Bulletin appears every Friday of term, with copy deadline the preceding Friday lunchtime. We welcome any suggestions for news, events, letters and small ads. The Bulletin is also now available on the World Wide Web, see University home page. Please contact the Information Office, Sussex House on ext. 8209 or email: Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.