West Dean College - Another String to the Bow

The partnership between Sussex and West Dean was recently formalised in a ceremony at the Chichester-based college. The alliance recognises West Dean's excellence in the teaching of conservation and restoration of antique furniture, clocks and ceramics as well as the making of tapestries and early stringed musical instruments. The College offers courses in these areas which lead to Postgraduate Diplomas of the University of Sussex.

West Dean College was inspired and funded by Edward James, a great patron of the arts in the early twentieth century. It has been training and educating students since 1971, offering practical courses in arts subjects. The college encourages an intensive work programme which is offset by the serenity of 6000 acres of sculpted private woodlands and the spectacular setting of the James mansion. James' eclectic collection of art, focusing heavily on surrealists Dali and Magritte, is also housed in the college.

One of the college's most popular courses involves constructing antiquated musical instruments, hailing from the Renaissance and other periods. Students can concentrate on either plucked instruments, like early guitars, or bowed instruments like the viol. Over the three year course, they are expected to make eight to 10 instruments which will then be sold to musicians or other buyers.

West Dean student, Christopher Walsh, pictured right with the Vice Chancellor is working on a bowed Renaissance instrument - 'Like a cross between a double bass and a cello'. The instrument, a group project involving four students, will have taken about a year to complete. According to Christopher - 'Just carving the neck and doing the inlay has taken me a couple of months.' His painstaking work is sure to be rewarded - West Dean graduates are numbered among the leading practitioners in their field throughout the world.

Sussex Astronomer Assists with The Birth of Time

The quest to solve the greatest mystery of the Universe is at the heart of a new book, The Birth of Time, by Dr John Gribbin. The mystery - the age of the Universe itself - was actually solved with the help of John's own astronomical discovery, made at Sussex with colleagues Simon Goodwin and Martin Hendry.

The team developed a technique in 1997 which firmly established the age of the Universe, finally solving a puzzle which had rocked the astronomy world for years. Embarrassing evidence had seemed to show that the Universe was younger by billions of years than the stars it contained. In 1994, information from the Hubble telescope pinpointed the age of the Universe to be about 10 billion years old, whilst estimates put the age of the stars at up to 16 billion. Continued overleaf.

Student Occupation

The student occupation of Sussex House ended at 3 pm on Friday afternoon when the occupiers left the building voluntarily.

It will be several days before the financial accounts and payroll offices are functioning normally. Meanwhile, arrangements have been put in place for the distribution of grant cheques and those access cheques drawn up before the occupation. These can now be collected from the Senior Common Room on the third floor of the Refectory. The student loans office has also been re-located to the Refectory together with the office responsible for payments to suppliers and staff. The outstanding access fund applications will be processed as a matter of urgency and some cheques should be ready towards the end of this week. The number to ring for enquires regarding grant cheques and student loans is (67) 8692. Enquiries regarding access funds should be directed to Shirley Shepherd on ext 3759.

The first floor entrance to the foyer in Sussex House will remain closed until the cleaning of the occupied offices is completed. Visitors should be directed to the entrance by the porters' lodge on the ground floor.
Sussex Astronomer Assists with The Birth of Time

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The Sussex team cut through the confusion by measuring the distances of thousands of galaxies to arrive at an accurate measurement of the Hubble constant, which is used to determine the age of the Universe. They found that the Universe was over 13 billion years old. At the same time, other researchers discovered that the stars were much younger than had previously been estimated. As John points out, "Partly thanks to work done at Sussex, the crisis has been solved - and I've got a fantastic story to tell in my book!"

*The Birth of Time* chronicles the race to solve the age of the Universe throughout the twentieth century. The quest goes back to the late 1920s when Hubble first discovered that the Universe was expanding. At the time it was thought that the Universe was only around 2 billion years old.

As John points out, "Debates over the age of the Universe, the earth and the stars have been a constant since the 1920s. Astronomers didn't go tearing their hair out over such anomalies, they bided their time until the technology developed to the point where it could solve the puzzle. With the new Hubble space telescope we've discovered so many new things already. What we know is always advancing."

New Computer – The ‘Adapted PC’

The Computing Service is pleased to announce the introduction of the ‘Adapted PC,’ a dedicated service for students with disabilities. The new PC is located in Chichester I and offers a variety of assistive technologies not currently available on other Computing Service equipment.

If you would like more information please contact the Computing Service Disability Advisor, Liz Davis, email E.A.Davis@sussex.ac.uk or telephone 3131.

Masterclasses in Technology

This year the University ran the 13th series of the SmithKline Beecham Masterclasses in Technology. The classes are run for pupils of schools in East and West Sussex by USIE and the Royal Institution of Great Britain.

As part of the course, the pupils went on a visit to the Royal Institution and the Science Museum and attended a lecture at the RI on *Great Scientists and Experiments at the Royal Institution*.

After completing the classes, the pupils attended an award ceremony at the University where they demonstrated their work and received their certificates from the Vice Chancellor, Alasdair Smith. This year there were four Masterclasses on:

- Paragliding (technology of hang-gliding)
- Technology and the insect world (technology of insect traps etc. for study and control)
- It's a Materials World (an overview of materials technologies)
- Technology goes to the Opera (focusing on the technology of opera sets at Glyndebourne Opera House).

Directorship to remain at Sussex

Three members of Sussex faculty are the new directors for the ESRC’s Global Environmental Change Programme. The post fell vacant on the appointment of the former Director, Professor Jim Skea, as Director of the Policy Studies Institute in London. Following a national competition Dr Ian Scoones, Dr Melissa Leach (both IDS) and Dr Frans Berkhout (SPRU) have been awarded the Directorship for the remaining 15 months of the Programme (April 1999-June 2000). The Directorship will be concerned with managing the end of existing research projects and disseminating to a national and international audience the main findings of the 10-year, £15 million UK research programme. This is the largest single programme that the ESRC has ever launched and it is widely regarded as having been successful in creating a strong UK social science research base on the environment.

Staff Opinion Survey

The University is carrying out a staff opinion survey during May, using a questionnaire developed by the Industrial Society.

A joint exercise with trade union representatives, the survey aims to gauge the attitude of all staff on a wide range of issues affecting their employment, including job satisfaction, rewards, opportunities for development, working relationships, communications and resources.

The Industrial Society will be conducting the survey and analysing the responses, to ensure complete anonymity. All staff are being asked to complete a confidential questionnaire so please take the opportunity to fill out your copy when it arrives.

The initial results should be available in late June and will enable the University both to compare itself with other organisations and to identify issues of concern, as a first step to improving the working environment.

Re-naming of Estates Building

Following the redesignation of the Estates Division as the Building & Services Division, the Estates Committee has now approved the re-naming of the the Estates Building (including Central Stores) as the Hastings Building.

Building and directional signs will be changed as soon as possible, and campus maps will be altered at the next re-printing.