New Registrar will be out and about

Neil Gershon saw in the new year surrounded by packing cases. No, he didn’t risk flying to the sun on the first day of the new millennium. Instead, he made a shorter journey in a removal van, from Petts Wood in Kent to Haywards Heath in West Sussex. And on New Year’s Day, Neil took up his appointment as Registrar & Secretary, responsible for 550 staff in the University’s administration.

Neil has already been around and about the University. (He’s the one with the loud tie.) “I don’t intend to sit in my office, nice though it is. I aim to go to places rather than for people to come to me, so I can get much more of a feel of the place.” He hopes to meet more of his new staff at a drinks reception on 24 January, between 4.00pm and 6.00pm in the Terrace, on level three of Bramber House.

So what does he see as the role of a university administration? “I think the only point of having an administration is to ensure that there’s an effective infrastructure to enable teaching and research. So the administration’s philosophy should be to do everything we can to enable the academic faculty to do the jobs which they’re appointed to do.

Continued on page 2.

Limpets lunch on chalk cliffs

Sussex loses more land to the sea each year than it gains. Every year, millions of pounds are spent on sea defences in an attempt to prevent flooding and coastal erosion. In 1999 the government announced a £50 million project to safeguard the cliffs at Beachy Head after large chunks of chalk fell into the English Channel.

Storms and rising sea levels (which are believed to be caused by global warming) are commonly held to be responsible. But research by Claire Andrews, a DPhil student in CPES, points the finger at gastropods such as piddocks and polydora worms — and, in particular, at tiny but hungry limpets (Patella vulgata), who are nibbling away the soft chalk rocks at Cuckmere Haven, Birling Gap (pictured above) and Saltdean. As the limpets graze the rocks eating algae, they also eat the chalk and hollow out places to rest between tides.

Claire was following up on the work of an obscure Victorian scientist, Hawkshore, who calculated that limpets were reducing the height of the foreshore at Dover by up to 1.5 mm a year. Nobody believed him, but more than a century later he seems to have been vindicated by Claire’s findings.

Over three years, she measured the amount of calcium carbonate (i.e. chalk) excreted by limpets at three research sites in Sussex, where they live in colonies on the shore platforms that extend from the base of the cliffs. Claire then calculated that up to 30 per cent of the natural erosion of the cliffs (1.3 mm a year in an area of dense limpet population) is caused not by wind and weather but by the limpets.

Dr Rendell Williams of CPES presented Claire’s findings to the annual conference of the Royal Geographical Society and the Institute of British Geographers, which Sussex hosted last week on campus.

He said of Claire’s work: “It was a very successful pioneer study. One always thinks it is waves, wind and storms which cause the greatest damage. However, where these limpets are found in large quantities they can be really destructive, moving across the chalk like mini-cows grazing away the green film on the rock.”

“The engineering assumptions about the durability of soft rocks as foundations for sea defences will have to be revised”, said Rendell. “With other destructive chalk borers like piddocks and polydora worms, the limpets are making a significant difference.”

A spokeswoman from the Environment Agency said that although the research was unlikely to change sea-defence strategy, the Agency would be looking at Claire’s findings in more detail.
The Mass-Observation project documents the lives of more than 3,000 ordinary people all over the UK. Its unique collection of diaries, photos, leaflets, newspaper cuttings and posters is held in the Library and is visited every year by hundreds of researchers.

Staff in the archive had a slight problem, as archivist Dorothy Sheridan explains: "Our researchers often get so immersed in what they are reading that they lose track of time and we can’t get them out at closing time."

As luck would have it, one of the archive’s regular correspondents, retired lorry driver Bob Rust, wished to give a donation in memory of his late wife. Bob has been a volunteer correspondent since 1981, recording his everyday life for use by the historians of the future.

“It is something that has given me great pleasure, as I enjoy writing. Leslie always took a great interest in what I was doing. Depending on the topic, we would often spend some time discussing what I was going to write: if she had any ideas on it or how I intended to approach that particular theme. She gave me the female slant on things."

The couple were married for 40 years. "I know Leslie will live on in my memory", said 65-year-old Bob, "but I wanted a little bit more than that. She had no time for stones and memorials, but she was always a practical person, so I thought, what better than something useful – not only useful, but connected with a project in which we both had an interest."

Dorothy had been impressed by the work of Brighton designer Cath Arlidge (together with her partner Marcus Laffan) on the new copper and oak sculpture seats in the Library foyer, so she commissioned Cath to design and make a clock specially for the Mass-Observation Archive reading room.

Just before Christmas, Bob Rust travelled from his home near Basildon, in Essex, to present the archive with the finished clock, which is shaped like an eye (to signify ‘observation’). The words ‘Mass-Observation’ are etched into its flame-like eyelashes and the green iris of the clock face is made of verdigris copper.

Although it does not chime, the piece is a striking addition to the archive’s reading room and will certainly help researchers to keep an eye on the time.

New Registrar will be out and about

Continued from front page.

After all, they’re the ones who earn the vast majority of the income the University has – and if we don’t enable them to be productive and effective, we stand no chance at all of being successful.”

Let’s take teaching first, then. "There is a clear need to think through the way that teaching should be delivered over the next five or ten years, particularly in the light of the enormous changes in technology that have been and there will continue to be. It would be dangerous for us to rely on the traditional undergraduate coming in for three years and being taught a selection of modules, when, increasingly, there seems to be a demand for people to come to higher-education institutions for a shorter period of time (perhaps coming more than once) and building up a portfolio of credits.”

Where does this demand come from? "It’s evident that one of the increasing problems that students are finding is the sheer cost of being here for three years. And what might be a way forward is to think about delivering parts of courses over Internet connections to people’s homes, which they can then pick up at their leisure (rather in the OU style, I suppose), with a core interactive element locally on the campus. We need to think about these issues and not be caught napping by other – possibly more nimble – competitors who see there’s an opportunity there."

Despite these plans, Neil does not envisage the introduction of study at sub-degree level. He is also adamant that the University must maintain a constant flow of high-quality students. "Having said that, I think the tradition of the University admitting students who have experience rather than formal qualifications is an admirable one and ought to be maintained. It adds to the overall richness and diversity of the University. That of course ties in with the mode of delivery: that market is at risk from the increased cost of being a student."

Neil’s emphasis on high quality extends to research. "On the research side, the University has some very distinguished groups. We must build on those groups of distinction and bring other groups up to those levels where it’s possible to do so – by making strategic investments, if necessary, by ensuring good facilities, and by providing all the back-up and infrastructure they need to conduct research of the highest quality. There’s no question that in order to attract top-quality people, one increasingly needs to provide high-quality facilities for them. We should always be aiming to ensure that our research groups are 5 or better: that’s what marks out a really successful university."

So if Neil’s vision becomes reality, will the campus become a building site? "There’s no doubt in my mind that an institution that doesn’t have at least one set of builders in at all times is stagnating. Whilst it may be inconvenient, if you’re not building something or converting something, then you’re not doing very well.” It looks like the Buildings and Services Division will be busy, then.

Win £5,000 for writing an essay

The Prospect magazine/ESRC New Century essay prize is a new award designed to promote clear thinking and lucid writing on the biggest issues of our times. The competition is for previously unpublished works. It is divided into two categories—academics and postgraduates—who are working in the social sciences, and other studies in the political and social field. The essays should connect specific areas of research to broader political, social and policy debates, crossing disciplinary boundaries where possible.

Winners in each category will be awarded a prize of £5,000; there is a runner’s up prize of £1,000. Essays should reach Prospect’s offices by 5.00pm on 31 March.

For a free copy of Prospect, further information about the competition, rules of entry or an entry form please visit the competition website at: www.prospect-magazine.co.uk or email newcentury@prospect-magazine.co.uk.
Sussex stars awarded distinctions

Professor Helen Wallace became a Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) in the New Year’s Honours List, for services to European Studies. Helen, founding director of the SEI and Jean Monnet Professor of Contemporary European Studies, has made a major contribution to the literature on European political integration. She is also director of ‘One Europe or Several?’, a programme funded by the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC) that comprises 24 research projects at various British universities (including two based at Sussex).

Dr Brian Davis, chief executive of Nationwide Building Society, was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the New Year’s Honours List. Brian, who is both a Sussex alumnus (having gained a BSc in Chemistry) and a member of the University’s Council, received his award for his services to the building society industry. He served as Chairman of the Building Societies Association from 1996–1998.

Daniel Salter, a 2nd-year student of Computer Systems Engineering, has received his Duke of Edinburgh’s Gold Award. Over a period of four years, Daniel was involved in a variety of activities and tasks: he designed a web site (www.brightononsea.org.uk) for the local award scheme and took part in an expedition in North Wales in which he had to show leadership qualities.

Out with the old year ...

Among the top 10 humanitarian books of 1999 is one co-edited by geographer Dr Richard Black (AFRAS) with Khalid Koser. The End of the Refugee Cycle received its chart-topping accolade from the Humanitarian Times (an email humanitarian news service). Mass migrations home (repatriation) in the 1990s is the subject of the book, which is based primarily on country case studies including Bosnia, Angola and Cambodia. Contributors tease out different constructions of ‘home’ that have meaning for refugees: in some cases (e.g. Eritrea or Bosnia), home is a new creation. The book also casts light on the new cycle of vulnerabilities that begins after refugees reach home and looks at the international structures of delivering protection and aid.

... in with the new

The Royal Society of Chemistry chose a Sussex paper to be the first of the year 2000 in its journal of physical-organic chemistry – appearing on page 1, volume 1. The article describes a new type of fullerene compound and provides information on the way in which atoms attach themselves to the surface of the fullerene cage. Authors Dr Tony Avent and Dr Roger Taylor from CPES collaborated on the work with colleagues at Southampton and Moscow State Universities.

Christmas competitions

We offered a bottle of bubbly for the wittiest answer to the following question: Who are the three wise men?

"I don't know" replied Hildi Mitchell (CCS), "but it's very rare to find three wise men all together."

Angi Drew (MSU) thought the answer was obvious:
1) The one who gets into the University car park before 8.45am.
2) The one who never needs network access on a Tuesday morning.
3) The one who leaves campus by 4.15pm.

Annis May Timpson (EAM), meanwhile, named the three wise men B, A and E, riding camels called Q, A and R.

A bottle of bubbly goes to each of our three wise women.
And our runner-up is Sue Straw (Postgraduate Admissions) for the following answer: 'The three wise men are from Estates Department and the leader is saying 'I still say this is the quickest route off campus.' Her prize is a slapped wrist for getting the name wrong.

The winner of a family ticket for Alice in Wonderland at the Gardner Arts Centre was Sean Goddard (Reader Services, Library) who got all five answers correct:
1) What was Lewis Carroll's real name?
   a) Charles Lutwidge Dodgson
2) When was Alice Adventure's in Wonderland published? a) 1865
3) In the 1933 film version, Gary Cooper played the White Knight. Who was cast as the Mock Turtle? b) Cary Grant
4) Who was not at the Mad Tea-Party? c) The White Rabbit
5) What colour did the playing cards paint the roses? b) Red

Research funding opportunities

This is a selection of research opportunities. More details of these and other opportunities are available from the Research Grants & Contracts Office. Contact Debbie, ext. 3812 or email D.Foy-Everett@sussex.ac.uk. For an extensive listing of funding opportunities see REFUND on the Research Website: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/research or USIS home page, under Research.

The ESRC is inviting applications under its Devolution and Constitutional Change programme. Research themes are: nationalism and national identity; governance and the constitution; and economic and social policy. Deadline: 31 January 2000

Applications are invited for the London Mathematical Society's research awards for subjects related to mathematics. Funding may be requested for: conferences; collaborative grants for joint research groups in the UK; and small collaborative grants for LMS members. Deadline: 31 January 2000

The Leverhulme Trust's Special Research Fellowships enable post-doc researchers to undertake research and limited teaching at a UK university for two years. Applications require matched funding from the host institution. All subjects are eligible. Deadline: 15 March 2000

The Royal Society invites applications for a fellowship programme consisting of a four-year package comprising two years' research in Japan followed by two years' research back in the UK. Applicants considered from the natural and applied sciences. Deadline: 20 March 2000

The AHRB has just announced a new resource enhancement scheme. Up to £300,000 is available (over a three-year period) to meet the costs of improving the utilisation and accessibility of existing research resources and materials of all kinds. Deadline: 19 May 2000

The BBSRC and EPSRC have announced the final call for proposals in their interdisciplinary Bioinformatics Initiative which aims to support the development of generic software and novel technologies for addressing challenges associated with data provision and making data available in electronic formats. Deadline: 31 May 2000

The MOD's Joint Grant Scheme will fund 50% of an application to a Research Council that has particular reference to MOD research priorities (see RGC for these). Academics are encouraged to develop research proposals with MOD scientists who will verify acceptability before the proposal is sent to the RC. No deadline

The Rockefeller Foundation has recently released new programme guidelines for 2000. Funding will be allocated under the following themes: creativity and culture; food security; health equity; working communities; and global inclusion. See RGO for info on programmes and deadlines.
Noticeboard

Lectures, Seminars, Colloquia

As the Bulletin is being produced fortnightly, we will include two weeks' lectures on the back page. Please make sure that you get information to us in time for the copy deadline. Information that misses the deadline will be put on the web at www.sussex.ac.uk/information_office/bulletin/ which will be updated every Friday.

There is now less space on the back page for small ads. All adverts sent in will be displayed on the web. Please keep adverts to 20 words or less.

Monday 17 January
4.00pm SCOAP Seminar: Norman Dombey, Positron tunnelling through the Coulomb Barrier for large Z. PEV 1A2.
4.00pm Sociology and Social Psychology Graduate/Faculty Seminar: Pam Alldred (South Bank), Discourse analytic approaches to research with children and young people. D310.

Tuesday 18 January
2.15pm SEI Research-in-Progress Seminar: Alistair Cole (Cardiff), The Europeanisation of French politics. A71.
4.15pm Biochemistry and Genetics & Development Seminar: Andy Munro (Strathclyde), Redox enzymes of the cytochrome p450 system. BLT.
4.15pm Social Anthropology Graduate/ Faculty Seminar: Ananta Giri (Madras Institute of Development Studies), Self-development and social transformation: The vision and the experiments of the socio-cultural movement of Swadhyaya in contemporary India. C233.

Wednesday 19 January
2.00pm Query Seminar: Paul Baker (Lancaster), The fall and rise of Polari: Subcultural speech and British gay identities. A71.

Thursday 20 January
5.00pm History Work-in-Progress Seminar: Les Benedict (Ohio State and Sussex), The common law at bay: Law and regulation in the United States during the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. A155.

Friday 21 January
2.15pm SPRU Seminar Series: Anthony Hey (Southampton), The future of computing, C133.
4.00pm Physical Chemistry Seminar: Torsten Seeger, Surface modification of carbon nanotubes. CH3-3R241.

Monday 24 January
1.00pm Experimental Psychology Seminar: Roland Baddeley and Helen Ingram, Near optimal and adaptive human spatial-motor adaption to realistic input. BLR.
4.00pm SCOAP Seminar: Dr Ernie Hill (Manchester), GMR and spin valve magnetics sensors. PEV 1A2.
4.00pm Sociology and Social Psychology Graduate/Faculty Seminar: John Smith (Sunderland), Methodological eclecticism in the psychology of action. D310.
4.30pm Neuroscience Seminar: Malcolm von Schantz (Surrey), Circadian processes in the retina. BLR.

Tuesday 25 January
12.30pm Centre for Life History Research Seminar: Alistair Thomson, Iconic memories and explanatory narratives: Patterns in migrant life stories and remembering. LMR.
2.15pm SEI Research-in-Progress Seminar: Karen Henderson (Leicester), Slovakia and the EU: An exceptional or a typical case? A71.
4.15pm Biochemistry and Genetics & Development Seminar: Dave Carling (Hammersmith Hospital), The AMP-activated protein kinase: A metabolic master switch? BLT.
4.15pm Social Anthropology Graduate/ Faculty Seminar: Peter Loizos (LSE), Refugees and social capital - some reflections. C253.
5.00pm Media Studies Graduate Seminar: Frank Bor (Bbfc), The work of the British Board of Film Classification. EDB 125.

Wednesday 26 January
5.00pm English Graduate Colloquium: Derek Attridge (York), Performing singularities: Invention and the event of literature. D 640.

Thursday 27 January
5.00pm History Work-in-Progress Seminar: Anne Meredith, Women and the Royal Horticultural Society. A155.

Friday 28 January
2.15pm SPRU Seminar: William Walker (St. Andrews), Institutional commitments and path-dependency. C133.
4.00pm Physical Chemistry Seminar: J. Robinson (Cambridge), Field emission from diamond, diamond-like carbon and carbon nanotubes. CH3-3R241.

CDU information

Students must enrol in advance for all courses. Sign-up in the main Office in CDU, Falmer House.
24 January 7.00pm - Employer talks: Careers in television production.
26 January 10.00am-4.00pm - Working in: Non-fiction writing. £10 fee.
27 January 10.00am-12.00 - Professional skills: Assessment centre written tasks.
27 January 2.00pm-4.00pm - Working in: IT project management.

Library catalogue help

Drop-in sessions for the Library catalogue will be held on the dates listed below. No booking needed, meet at enquiries/reception in the Library entrance.
Monday 17 January 1.00-2.00pm
Tuesday 18 January 1.00-2.00pm
Thursday 20 January 6.00-7.00pm
Friday 21 January 1.00-2.00pm
Monday 24 January 1.00-2.00pm
Thursday 27 January 6.00-7.00pm
Friday 28 January 1.00-2.00pm

Abbreviations

Below is a list of some of the abbreviations commonly used on the back page of the Bulletin.
BLR - Biology Lecture Room
BLT - Biology Lecture Theatre
CLT - Chichester Lecture Theatre
LMR - Library Meeting Room
PEV - Pevensey building
CHI - Chichester building

Volunteer Fair

Visit the Volunteer Fair on Wednesday 19 January from 12.00 to 4.00pm in Falmer House. Over 50 charities and voluntary groups present. All welcome.

Small ads

THANK YOU: To all friends and colleagues in Sussex House for the generous gift received by Peter the Sussex House porter and Jean in the tea bar.
APPLE MAC TUITION: If you want help with your Mac contact Alec Gilmore on 01903 767661 or email a.gilmore@sussex.ac.uk.
FRENCH: Practise French with a native speaker. Conversation, improve your accent or help with children's homework. Email Ldub4.euro@central.sussex.ac.uk.
FOR SALE: Persian carpet, six metres, silk, hand-made, beautiful floral design on creamy background, £600 ono. Tel. 248102.
WANTED: Postgrad/staff couple plus child seek 2/3 bed house in Brighton. Like gardening, need space to build train sets. Phone 542482 or email alexad@sussex.ac.uk.
LOST: Blue mirrored sunglasses in soft navy case, lost around 1.00pm on 10 Jan in Bramber House area. Please return to Ron Chrisley in COGS or phone 678581.

Bulletin

The next issue of the Bulletin will be out on Friday 28 January. The copy deadline for that issue will be 1.00pm on Friday 21 January.
Please contact the Information Office in Sussex House on ext. 8888 or email Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.