By royal appointment

His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh made his first official visit to campus for 35 years on 29 March, when he accompanied the Queen on a royal tour of the new city of Brighton & Hove.

Escorted by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, the Duke's visit began with a tour of the Sussex Innovation Centre by its award-winning director, Mike Herd.

The centre provides support for the creation and growth of new technology companies and the Duke visited some of its outstanding successes, including Proneta, which specialises in the design of electronic systems and sensors; Viking Media, which offers multimedia marketing solutions to blue-chip clients; and mechanical product design consultancy, Critical Path Engineering.

The royal visitor then heard a presentation by Dr Adrian Thompson (COGS) on the latest advances in artificial intelligence and saw a demonstration of the new breed of biologically inspired robots, including 'Maggie', named after Professor Margaret Boden from COGS. The Duke, who seemed slightly bemused by the creature, said: "It's a very jolly toy, but what are you supposed to do with it?" Adrian explained that the machine helps to study evolution.

Moving on to the Meeting House, the Duke met the University Chaplain, the Revd Dr Gavin Ashenden, who explained the multi-faith nature of the Meeting House and introduced him to the University's denominational chaplains – Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Baptist.

In addition, Prince Philip talked to staff and students about the various ways the University supports the physical and emotional needs of its students. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Dr Mary Stuart introduced him to representatives of the Students' Union, Student Support Unit, Student Employment Office, Career Development Unit and Assistive Technology Centre (ATC).

The Duke joked with students who are supported by the ATC about his own lack of technical know-how. He said: "The one thing they never tell you about televisions is the one thing you need to know, and that's how to switch it on. You end up with the thing on the floor with a torch in your mouth and the instructions, trying to work it out."

After a reception in Brighton's Corn Exchange, Prince Philip and the Queen lunched in the splendid setting of the Royal Pavilion's banqueting room, where the University was represented by Elizabeth Moore, Arts Administrative Officer.

Later the same day, the royal couple met Sussex students on a web design course that the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) runs in partnership with Lighthouse Arts and Training in Brighton.

New medical school for Brighton approved

The Universities of Sussex and Brighton were told last week (30 March) that their joint bid to create an undergraduate medical school has been successful.

The Government's announcement means that the new Brighton and Sussex Medical School for 128 trainee doctors is expected to be up and running by autumn 2003.

The Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton will be the main teaching hospital, with additional teaching facilities at the universities' Falmer sites. The £28.5 million venture, which will be funded by the Department of Health and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), will create around 20 new consultant appointments as well as the equivalent of 20 full-time jobs in teaching. Vice-Chancellor Professor Alasdair Smith said: "The new school will be firmly based on the established strengths of the two universities in educating and training health professionals and in science teaching and research. Both institutions are committed to innovation in teaching and provide an ideal base for a forward-looking approach to medical education."

Sir David Watson, Director of the University of Brighton, said: "The Brighton and Sussex Medical School will be a major asset for the communities of the city and the region, as well as the two universities, their students and staff, and the NHS. We look forward to being able to plan our part in forming the next generation of doctors and meeting the challenges of modern health care."

Brighton Kemp Town MP Des Turner, who supported the bid in the Commons, said: "It is great for Brighton and Sussex because universities of their stature need medical school status. It will further encourage all the excellent medical research which already goes on."

The University of Brighton will provide the professional aspects of the course through its faculties of health, sciences and engineering, while Sussex will provide the biological science teaching.
In brief

Read all about it
The fourth issue of the Sussex journal *Studies in Social and Political Thought* was published last month. Articles include: ‘In defence of social structure’, ‘Professor Macmurray and Mr Blair’, ‘Civil society theory and Euro-nationalism’ and ‘The elephant at the dinner table’, a critical analysis of the US elections. The journal is available to buy on campus from the Newsagent or the Bookshop. To order by post, email sps.sales@sussex.ac.uk. The first two issues are available online at www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/SFT/journal.

Easter basketball
The Sport Service is running an Easter basketball camp, following the success of last year’s summer camp. The camp will run from 18 to 20 April and is open to boys and girls aged 12–18. For more information and a booking form, contact the Sportcentre reception on ext. 8228 or email info@sussexsport.com.

Cheers!
Congratulations to Professor Tony Fielding (SOC), winner of a bottle of champagne as reward for completing a TLU survey on the use of communications and information technology to support teaching and learning. The TLU would like to thank all staff who returned the questionnaire.

New category of ILT membership
The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT) is to introduce Associate membership, which may be particularly useful to postgraduate teaching assistants, but will also cater for staff who are currently ineligible because they have relatively little teaching experience or a narrow breadth of expertise. Applicants will need the equivalent of only one year’s experience in teaching or learning support. The annual subscription will be £49, with a processing fee for individuals of £25. Contact the ILT direct on (01904) 434222.

First class

Kristian Berggreen, manager of Sussex University Bookshop, has been elected to the Council of the Booksellers Association of the UK and Ireland, to serve from 2001–2004. "It's quite an honour to get on to the Council," said Steve Pavey, Director of Finance. Kristian has been a bookseller for over 40 years; after ten years in general book selling in Denmark, he moved to Sussex in 1970, where he later succeeded Bob Marshall as manager.

Scott Clendenning, a research student in the final year of his Chemistry DPhil (CPES), is £1,000 richer with the award of the Edward Boyle prize, which is given annually to a Canadian student in the UK who is outstanding in his or her research activities and personal qualities.

The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture has honoured Professor Craig Clunas (CCS) with an Iris Foundation Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Decorative Arts. Craig will travel to New York for the presentation ceremony on 12 April. In recommending him as an Iris Award winner, the Bard faculty pointed out that Craig has almost single-handedly brought the field of Chinese cultural history into the Western intellectual mainstream. "They like my stuff," Craig said, more succinctly. "I'm chuffed."

The winner of the first Philosophy prize in COGS is Tristan Garrick, for his dissertation entitled, 'Can Aristotle's soul exercise Descartes' ghost in the machine?'. The prize is awarded for high undergraduate research achievement in dissertations and can be accepted either as cash or as a fee waiver for each year of postgraduate registration in COGS. Tristan was a philosophy undergraduate in SOC and is now doing the MA in Philosophy of Cognitive Science.

Undergraduate Paul Matthews (CPES) has won the British Universities Sport Association (BUASA) heavyweight judo title despite breaking a thumb. The chemistry student told the *Evening Argus*: "It was painful but I thought if I was going to break something I might as well win something."

Professor Sir Harry Kroto (CPES) has been elected president of the Royal Society of Chemistry, with effect from July 2002.

The Mathematics and Statistics Subject Group will shortly number a second current Vice-Chancellor among its alumni, the first being Professor Tim O'Shea, the Master of Birbeck College, London. Professor Norma Reid has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of South Africa's largest university, the University of the Witwatersrand, which has 18,000 students. A Sussex maths alumnus twice over, she was an undergraduate from 1970–73 and took an MSc in Statistics the following year. When she moves to Johannesburg later this year, Professor Reid will become the first female and the fourth foreigner to head the 80-year-old institution. She is currently Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Plymouth.

Dancing with robots

A groundbreaking project has just been launched that will bring an exciting new dimension to the performing arts using computer technology.

Sci-art: Bio-robotic

Choreography is an initiative that brings together artists, computer programmers and technicians for an intriguing exploration of human/machine relationships.

Dr Inman Harvey from the Centre for Computational Neuroscience and Robotics in COGS has joined forces with Nottingham Trent University to pioneer the project, which will involve the development of an intelligent insect-like robot large enough to support a human.

The robot, designed by Inman, will have the ability to work in partnership with a human body to experiment with alternative kinds of choreography. The aim is to explore more compliant and flexible ways of interaction between the body and the machine.

Bringing his expertise and experience to Sci-art is world-renowned performance artist Stelarc. Over the last 30 years, the Australian has gained acclaim for his examination of the body’s capabilities and experiences through augmentation and extension using prosthetics, robotics, virtual reality systems and the Internet.

Science previously met art in 1998 when Stelarc was in residence at the Centre for Computational Neuroscience and Robotics. During his visit he demonstrated a robotic arm controlled by his muscles, using electrodes inserted into his abdomen and legs.

Commenting on the Sci-art project, Stelarc explained: "The body is not merely a passenger on the robot. The smart robot design will result in a more subtle interface. The robot’s mode of locomotion, its direction and speed arc actuated by the shifting of the body’s weight and the twisting of the torso."

The 13-month project, which has been awarded funding from the Wellcome Trust, will conclude with a series of performances to be held in Brighton, Nottingham and London.
A walk on the wild side

David Harper and David Streeter BIOLS

And just to say that spring was come,
The violet left its woodland home,  
And, hermit-like, from storms and wind,  
Sought the best shelter it could find.  
(John Clare, Holywell)

Spring came formally on 21 March and dead on cue the violets have appeared, fulfilling  
John Clare’s vernal expectations.  
At least four different kinds can be found on campus. Most of  
those now flowering along the road-side banks and woodland  
walks are Sweet Violets, so  
called because of their fleeting  
scents. The leaves, which are  
covered by sparse hairs, and the  
deep rich-purple flowers arise  
from the base of the plant, which  
throws out runners rather like  
those of strawberries.

Sweet Violets are most frequent on calcareous soils although,  
having been cultivated for  
centuries, they often occur as  
garden escapes. A careful search  
along the woodland paths should  
also reveal Early Dog-violets,  
another species that avoids more  
acid and heavy soils. Unlike Sweet  
Violets, the flowers, which are of  
a distinctly bluer shade, arise as side  
shoots on the branched stem and the  
leaves are quite hairless and there are no runners.

In two or three weeks’ time  
both of these species will be  
replaced by the much more  
widely spread Common Dog-violet.  
Superficially it is very similar to  
the Early Dog-violet but the ‘spur’  
at the back of the flower is paler  
than the rest of the petals.

Despite the wet weather in  
March, many mammals on  
campus have started breeding.  
The earliest babies Rats of the  
year are now making their first  
tentative appearances at burrow  
entrances, but young Grey  
Squirrels remain snug in their  
drey. Regular sightings of a Red  
Fox carrying food near BIOLS  
suggests that a local vixen has  
young. Like the squirrel ‘kittens’,  
her cubs will not emerge until  
later this month.

A final welcome sign of spring  
is the return of migrant birds  
from warmer climes. The first  
back to campus are usually tiny  
Common Chiffchaffs with their  
onotonous repeated ‘chiff-chauf’  
song and the larger, more  
melodious, Blackcaps. Since a few  
individuals of both of these warbler  
species winter on campus, only  
individuals singing persistently  
are likely to be new arrivals. This  
‘rule’ suggests that the first  
migrant Chiffchaff arrived  
in Botes (the copse north of  
Brightlhelm) by 9 March but that  
the first Blackcap did not return  
until the 26th.

Campus is part of a wooded  
‘island’ in a ‘sea’ of open farmland  
and urban sprawl, close to the  
south coast. Thus interesting  
migrant birds often turn up.  
March’s highlights were an  
exceptionally early House Martin  
over Sussex House on the 12th, a  
Common Buzzard soaring high  
over Brightlhelm on the 14th and a  
minute, jewel-like male Firecrest  
near Bramber House on the 26th.  
These monthly articles are  
available on the Bulletin’s web-site  
with links to pictures and  
additional information.

Below: The Common Dog-violet is very  
similar to the Early Dog-violet but the  
‘sput’ at the back of the flower is paler  
than the rest of the petals.
Doctors miss the hidden distress of cancer patients

People with cancer are not being given enough help in dealing with the stress and worry of having the disease, claim researchers at Sussex.

Experts believe that around a quarter of a million cancer patients in the UK are suffering with some form of depression or anxiety. The new study – the biggest of its kind in the UK and published at the end of March in the *British Journal of Oncology* – shows that over-stretched cancer doctors are not able to spot those who need counselling or referral to a specialist.

Professor Lesley Fellowes, who is heading the research, explains: “If we can diagnose depression and anxiety more effectively then we can ensure that every patient gets the right treatment. For example, we could refer them to a specialist counsellor.”

The study involved 2,300 people attending 34 hospitals across the country. Patients were asked to complete self-assessment questionnaires before seeing a doctor and these indicated that over a third might benefit from some kind of psychological support.

Worryingly, the 143 cancer specialists taking part in the study identified only a quarter of these patients. This could mean that as many as 180,000 people in the UK are not receiving the help they need.

Previous studies show that patients benefit when doctors have been coached in communication skills and these ought to become standard in clinical training. It may also be possible for all cancer patients to fill out a questionnaire before they see a doctor that will highlight those most likely to need extra attention. Lesley believes that in addition, touchscreens, which provide patients with reliable information on cancer, can be useful in allaying people’s anxieties.

Professor Gordon McVie, Director General of the Cancer Research Campaign, which funds the Sussex group’s research, says: “Being diagnosed and treated for cancer is a very stressful time and it is vital that people who need a little extra help are provided for.”

Fresh perspectives on identity

A conference at Sussex on 10 and 11 April will present an opportunity for the dissemination of current research on teaching and learning for graduates across the UK.

The conference, which is being organised by Sussex DPhil student Selina Todd, will promote these areas in which Sussex history has nationally recognised strengths, such as women’s history and working-class history. Sessions include: Gender, resistance and reaction in modern Spain; Class, community and gender in England; and Autobiography and drama in the creation of collective identity.

Six current Sussex postgraduate history students will be among the 20 postgraduates giving presentations on their work. In addition, former Sussex postgraduate history students Dr Hera Cook and Jane Greening will be chairing sessions on career development and publishing opportunities for the graduate participants.

The conference has been awarded funding from the ESRC, as a recognised Postgraduate Training Event. Booking fees range from £5 for students/unwrapped to £10 for waged participants.

For further details, email S.Todd@sussex.ac.uk.