Sussex cancer protein research wins funding

A protein that regulates the growth of blood cells could provide a vital clue in the fight against the blood cancer lymphoma, according to a biochemist at Sussex.

Dr Alison Sinclair, from the School of Biological Sciences, has been awarded £100,000 by the Leukaemia Research Fund (LRF) to further her research into this protein, called p27.

"This protein is one of the body’s main mechanisms to prevent normal blood cells multiplying when they shouldn't," Alison explains. "But for some reason it is not activated in lymphoma cells. We are seeking to find out why this happens and to develop a drug that could, eventually, be used to activate this protein in lymphoma cells."

Lymphoma is a group of cancers that form in the body’s lymphatic system – a series of vessels that drain fluid away from the body's tissues and return it to the blood system. The general term lymphoma includes about a dozen different forms of the disease but there are two main categories: Hodgkin's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

In the UK, the incidence of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma has been rising over the last 40 years. The rate of increase is about 4 per cent per year. If this level of increase is sustained it will mean that by 2025, the incidence of the disease will be comparable with that of breast, colon, lung and skin cancer.

Dr David Grant, Scientific Director of the LRF, comments: "Lymphoma is one of the few cancers that continue to show increases in both incidence and associated mortality in the western world. If we can fully understand how this cancer develops, this will pave the way for more targeted treatments. In the longer term, it will also enable scientists to look for ways to prevent the disease."

Joan Beales, of the Brighton, Hove and District Branch of LRF, says: "It’s a real boost to our efforts, seeing money we have raised being invested in such worthwhile research here in Brighton."

Not just a pretty molecule

Chemists around the world will be turning green with envy when they hear about the latest development in organic chemistry at Sussex.

As Dr Roger Taylor, Reader in Chemistry at Sussex, explains, he and his team have accidentally made a remarkable discovery:

"I was clearing up some shelves to make some space and found a flask that had a beautiful emerald-green crystal in it, which turned out to be a unique type of fullerene, never seen before."

Fullerenes are carbon molecules, discovered in 1985 by Professor Sir Harry Kroto and his team. What Roger and his colleagues – including Olga Boltalina, Adam Darwish, Peter Hitchcock and Xian-Wen Wei – had actually isolated was [18]trannulene, which is a type of fullerene.

"Although we were targeting this type of compound, we didn't expect to get a hole in one!”, Roger adds.

The general structure of fullerenes was proposed only three years ago by chemists in Germany, but until now it was not known how or if they could be made. The Sussex team, who are funded by the Royal Society, have now shown that the process is actually very simple, taking just five

minutes in one vessel.

These compounds are found in both chlorophyll (the molecule responsible for photosynthesis in plants) and haemoglobin (the pigment in blood that transports oxygen).

The focus worldwide of fullerene chemistry is to prepare compounds that can transfer light into electrical energy. To do this, it is necessary to attach chemical groups to the molecule that can release electrons under light stimulation.

Previously no one has managed to attach more than one such group, but the structure of the [18]trannulene molecule gives the Sussex researchers the potential to attach three groups, placing them at the forefront of research in this area.

The new findings are described in this month's edition of Angewandte Chemie, one of the leading chemistry journals in the world.

Thrills but no frills at the Edinburgh Festival

For the very first time, a Sussex student society is taking a show to the Edinburgh Festival – but the Bulletin readers have the chance to see it first.

The Sussex University Musical Theatre Society (SMuTS) will present the UK premiere of The Noel Frills Reviews – an off-Broadway hit in New York during the 1980s – in the Meeting House on 15 August. A few days later, they will pile into a Students' Union minibus and head up north.

Following on from their successful production of "Fame in February, 14 members of SMuTS will make the trip to Scotland. They include the cast of six - Jenny Barnett (CCS), Sarah Bevan (CCS), Philip Doyle (BiOLs), Jenna Gross (EUPD), Lamheed Master (CCS) and Andrew Tudor (CGS) - a technical crew and a band.

SMuTS' production north of the border is receiving financial support from the University's Student Development Fund. "We originally wanted to take Fame to Edinburgh, but it was too big a show," says director Stephen Baker, who has just graduated from SLS with a first-class law degree. "The No- Frills Reviews is a bit like 'The Fast Show', with lots of quick-fire sketches. SMuTS' presence at the festival makes them eligible for the prestigious Pierrier Award. Described in the festival programme as "an explosive mix of musical comedy, sketches, supermarket checkouts and the lost manuscripts of Stephen Sondheim", the show was conceived and originally directed by Martin Charnin, most famous for the lyrics to the musical Annie. The one-off performance on campus is free of charge and takes place at 7.30pm.
**Obituaries**

*Above: University organist Charles Macdonald.*

**Charles Macdonald**

Charles Macdonald, who had been the University organist since 1994, succumbed to cancer last month at the age of 52.

A funeral service was held for him at St Peter's church in Brighton at which many hundreds of people from the worlds of music, the Church and education paid their respects.

Charles offered a colourful range of weekly recitals in the Meeting House that drew audiences from all over the south of England and was also organist at the parish church in Steyning. He played at the funeral of Lord Olivier and gave recitals at numerous cathedrals and churches.

The University Chaplain, Revd Dr Gavin Ashenden, said: “Charles combined exquisite musicianship with a deep humanity, which made him not only a first-rate performer, but also a sympathetic companion and friend to those who worked with him.”

“Charles made the University a more interesting and more colourful place. He was in every respect a big man, whose heart and talent matched his frame.”

**Peter Wright**

Peter Wright, who served the University for 28 years from 1965 to 1993, died peacefully at his home in Woodingdean on 13 July, aged 73.

Starting as a technician in the Physics mechanical workshop, Peter progressed to the post of supervisor and oversaw the complete refurbishment of the workshop, turning it into a modern facility.

Peter was a true socialist, treating everyone equally. When former Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir Denys Wilkinson turned up to the 1986 MAPS Christmas party without a ticket, Peter refused him entry. Sir Denys introduced himself in the VC; Peter was not impressed. “And I’m King Canute,” he said. “No ticket, no admission.”

He made many friends supporting research groups and teaching, while keeping his colleagues amused with his tales of seamanship and fishing expeditions on his boat, the ‘Rogue’. He will be greatly missed by all, particularly by those who survived the fishing trips.

*Malcolm Strong*

**First class**

Former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gordon Conway, received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Brighton on 1 August, in recognition of his international contribution to environmental science and agricultural sustainability. Gordon left Sussex in 1998 to become President of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York.

Emeritus Professor and Nobel Laureate Sir John Cornforth (CPES) received the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Society of Chemistry at a meeting on 18 July in Burlington House, Piccadilly.

New psychology graduate Deborah Hornby has been awarded the George Butterworth Memorial Prize for her final-year project on infants’ ability to distinguish between facial expressions. Deborah was presented with the prize at a COGS lunch prior to her graduation ceremony on 17 July.

Gabriel Josipovici (HUMS), Research Professor of English and European Literature, has received recognition for his high scholarly distinction and achievement with election as one of 33 new fellows of the British Academy, the national learned society for the humanities and social sciences. Gabriel joins five existing fellows from Sussex: Professors Maggie Boden, Gerald Gazdar, Donald Winch, Blair Worden and Margaret McGowan.

A creative writing tutor in the Centre for Continuing Education has been shortlisted for a national poetry award. Catherine Smith is a finalist in the Forward Prize, an annual Waterstone’s competition. Catherine was selected for her first collection, *The New Bride*, published by Smith Doorstop. She is currently working on her first novel. The winners of the competition will be announced on 3 October, the eve of National Poetry Day.

The Society for Research into Higher Education has declared Dr Ruth Woodfield (SOC) as its Younger Researcher of the Year, an award that brings a grant of £1,000 to fund a pilot project on attendance rates among male university students.

Sussex scientists told how to get their message across

A scientist is after the truth, however dull. A journalist is after the truth, as long as it isn’t dull.

This was one of the many home truths delivered by Tim Radford, science editor of the Guardian, when he came to campus to talk to Sussex scientists about how to get the media interested in their work.

He also pointed out to those who had gathered in the Meeting House to hear him that scientists may be obliged to publish their work, but that publication is not a guarantee that anyone – “not even the author’s mother” – will read it. And he compared this with newspapers, which would not survive if they were not read.

But he went on to explain that we are all natural storytellers and that scientists should be able to explain their research. “Some scientists take to journalism in a way that makes us wish they were journalists,” he observed. “And it’s generally those who are at the top of their tree who are better at talking about their work.”

Radford, who was the Guardian’s literary editor before moving to the science desk more than 20 years ago, admitted to underhand tactics for getting academics to explain their findings to a lay audience. “I used to phone up the scientists and pretend I hadn’t read the journals, and then try to get them to talk through their work with me.” Frequently he has to rewrite articles two or three times before his newspaper’s editors are convinced this is a story they want to run.

At its most basic level, he said, the media are interested in science if it helps to explain where the Universe came from, where life came from and where we came from. Sex and death – particularly death by disease – are also high on the list, with geology, botany and zoology also attracting column inches.

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**Queer About Campus**

The centrepiece is a student’s room, complete with bed and bedside phone. On the wall is the noticeboard that time forgot, with memorabilia from the 1960s onwards. Protest t-shirts hang in the pink closet.

*G-Scene magazine, Brighton’s gay monthly, called the Queer About Campus show “stunning” when it was first displayed in Falmer House back in February. Now it is to be shown again, at the Fishing Museum on Brighton seafront.*

The exhibition chronicles 40 years of gays and lesbians at the Universities of Sussex and Brighton, using photographs, news reports, banners and leaflets as well as dozens of interviews with staff and students.

*Queer About Campus is a joint project between the University of Sussex LGBT Group and Brighton Onserty queer history archive, with funding from East Sussex, Brighton and Hove Health Authority. The exhibition runs from 12 to 19 August, 12noon-5pm daily. Entry is free of charge.*
New VC has her 'Wits' about her

Professor Norma Reid, who studied mathematics at Sussex in the early 1970s, has taken up her appointment as Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand, one of the top research universities in South Africa.

Professor Reid is the first female, and fourth foreigner, to head up 'Wits', which has always been an 'open' university, in that it did not discriminate on racial or any other grounds and protested strongly at the Government's enforcement of university apartheid.

This tolerant and liberal ethos appealed strongly to Professor Reid, her time at Sussex having sparked off a lifetime of commitment to equality of opportunity.

She remembers arriving at Sussex a naive and scared 18-year-old, never having left Northern Ireland before. She left just before the Troubles started in earnest but recalls, "Northern Ireland at that time was a very closed society. I came from a very remote part but I was aware that something wasn't right and I was desperate to find out what was really going on. I thought if I went away I could find out what was happening from the outside."

At that time, in the early 1970s, Sussex was considered a radical and modern university. Professor Reid was attracted to it because "It had as good an academic reputation as Oxfbridge, combined with a political edge." Her interest in South Africa was awakened and she saw parallels with the situation in Northern Ireland: "Understanding the situation in South Africa gave me lots of answers about the problems in Northern Ireland."

Professor Reid also made long-lasting friendships at Sussex, not least with fellow undergraduate Morag Stalker, who now works at the University as Administrator in USIE. They lived in the all-female halls of residence when they first arrived and are pictured below outside Lancaster House in Spring 1971, with Norma Reid on the far right of the 2nd row and Morag Stalker first left.

Professor Reid recalls her desperate need to fit in: "I'd bought some fashion magazines and they were saying that the mini skirt was very fashionable. Of course, coming from an isolated part of Northern Ireland I had no idea what was in, and so I proceeded to make three of these skirts in a heavy tweed fabric. To my horror when I arrived at Sussex I realised that everyone was still in the throes of 'flower power', so I spent most of my first term's grant on buying a whole new wardrobe!"

Academic success followed after graduation, with a post at the LSE. Professor Reid took a number of senior positions, including Pro-Vice-Chancellor at Coventry University and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Plymouth, before being offered the Wits post.

She describes the selection process as intense: "There were five days of interviews, presentations and meetings. The connection with Sussex undoubtedly helped as it is a well-known university in South Africa. Indeed, during the first large-scale public meeting I used a slide of the Gardner Arts Centre and spoke of my political awakening at Sussex."

Professor Reid speaks warmly of her time at Sussex and, in particular, her former tutors Professor John Bather, Professor Charles Goldie and Dr John Haigh, who have followed her career with interest. "They always remember me. I really appreciate the contact and it makes me feel that I am still part of Sussex," she says.

A walk on the wild side

David Harper and David Streeter BIOLS

Badgers are very popular mammals and yet most people have never seen a wild one alive. Images of having to sit silently for hours in the cold in a dark wood - and the real fear of betraying a sett's presence to depraved criminals - deter many people from even trying to spot Brock.

August is, however, a good time to do so without even leaving campus. The local Badger cubs are now about three-quarters grown but they remain playful. They are ranging father afield, often visiting lawns on campus. The nights are still short and the recent dry spells have made earthworms and other soil-dwelling invertebrates hard. Thus the Badgers are active promptly at dusk and, as most summers, are even visiting campus residences looking for extra food.

Any day now, Blackberries will become ripe enough to attract Badgers and many other animals. Those joining the feast will probably include the cheeky Fox cub who sleeps under parked cars during the oppressive heat of the day.

Regular patrons of the temporary Biology tea room seeking a sunny spot were intrigued recently by a small notice stuck in the grass, which read, "Corn Parsley - rare weed, do not squash!" By no means a spectacular plant, it is nonetheless one of the arable weeds that has been severely affected by modern agriculture and is classed as 'threatened' on a European scale. Although an umbellifer (member of the Cow Parsley family) and closely related to the familiar garden Parsley, it has no culinary value.

Another member of the same family with culinary associations that is prominent in field borders and roadside around campus at the moment is Wild Carrot. A common plant of rough grassland and disturbed ground on chalky soils, it is unusual in that the central flower of the otherwise white inflorescence can often be a deep purple. The great 17th-century herbalist, John Gerard, considered these dark flowers, 'a certain remedy for Falling Sickness'. The true significance of the purple flower is a matter for conjecture. It has even been suggested that it evolved as an insect mimic and acts as a lure to pollinators! The roots do indeed smell of carrots, but the cultivated vegetable is descended from a different Mediterranean subspecies. When the seeds are ripe the umbel closes up to resemble an unduly cup, which has given the plant its local names of Bird’s Nest and Crown’s Nest.

Few of the birds on campus are nesting now because they are mouthing. Usually only the adults replace the long flight feathers in the wings and tail. Look out for this in large species such as Herring Gulls. Most of the silvery grey adults now have an obvious gap along the rear of their wings when seen flying overhead, while the brown mottled youngsters do not.

Left: A badger emerging from its sett. Badgers are active at dusk and, as in most summers, are even visiting campus residences looking for extra food.

(photo © Earnest Neal)
Girls from schools in Hampshire spent a week in EIT last month on a scheme to encourage them to consider engineering as a career.

“The idea was to give the girls a taste of university life and for them to undertake a range of activities designed to promote interest in engineering as a future career,” said organiser Dr Helen Prance.

The 26 girls, aged 15 to 16 and in Year 10, attended lectures, did work on electronic circuits, carried out multi-media work in the new Media Technology Lab, and visited local scientific sites and exhibitions.

There was also a competition to build the strongest bridge structure (pictured above), won by Melody James and Megan Beddoes, both from the Romsey School.

The course is funded each year by the Trident Trust, an Eastleigh-based charity that promotes work experience and citizenship skills for secondary school pupils.

Schools’ in for summer

Pupils from 29 inner-city London schools spent a week on campus last month getting a taste for university life. The 99 talented youngsters, who had just finished their GCSEs, were taking part in the government’s Excellence in Cities summer school scheme.

Co-ordinator Dr Tim Metham said: “The summer school is one of many activities that the University offers aimed at giving young people a taste of higher education. The residential programme gave 16-year-olds who may not have previously thought about higher education the opportunity to take part in a range of subject-based workshops, use the University’s facilities and participate in a packed programme of sporting and social activities.”

Seven specialist courses covered a range of broad-based topics, offering the pupils the chance to develop their particular interests and exposing them to some of the different directions available in an undergraduate programme. All of the courses were set around current areas of interest and study at Sussex.

“It’s fun to interact and have debates,” one student told her tutor for the week, Dr Clare Birchall.

“It’s not like school, it’s more interesting and we’re not forced to do things. I like being sort of in charge of what we discuss.”

As well as engaging in academic study, the youngsters visited the Library, Student Employment Office, residences and Students’ Union and got the low-down on life at Sussex from current students in a ‘buddy’ mentor session. There was also a full series of social, sporting and cultural events, both on and off campus.

Reviewing the week, Tim said: “We hope that the programme gave the group first-hand experience of student life and raised their awareness of the opportunities and fun that university can offer, raising their aspirations and motivating them towards further study.”

The summer school certainly had an effect on one enthusiastic student, who said that he hadn’t really thought about higher education before because “more people go to prison than university on my estate”.

Small ads

FREE TO COLLECT: Old furniture, tables and chairs - first come, first served. Contact Malver Sports Complex reception on ext. 7125.

WANTED: 5- to 8-yr-olds for COGS Equator project, to play with new technology toys whilst exploring and playing with colours. 30-min. sessions, small payment. Ext. 2614, email hilary@cohgs.susx.ac.uk or silvia@cohgs.susx.ac.uk.

SMOKERS WANTED: To complete an established scopolamine drug study, which pays £20 for 2-3 hours of your time. Drug administered via a (tiny!) injection under the skin. Must be native English speakers. Contact Trusti Edginton, EP, ext. 8916 or email trudie@biols.susx.ac.uk.

ACCOMMODATION WANTED: Pref. flat/bedsit, within commuting distance of campus, for prospective student on housing benefit. Any time from mid-Aug./Sept. for at least 1 yr, pref longer. Contact David on 07799063282 or email omshant2012@yahoo.co.uk.

FOR SALE: Macintosh Powerbook 1400CS/117, 16 MB memory, PowerPC 603/117 Mhz processor. MacOS 7.6, Word for Mac 6.0, PSCMIA modem card. TDK 2814; CD ROM drive. Sold with StyleWriter II printer. £400. Contact c.surpreem@sussex.ac.uk.

NORMANDY: 17th-C timber-framed house to rent in Pays d'Auge. Sleeps 5+. All mod cons inc. tumble dryer, dishwasher, computer sockets. CH, open fireplace for winter. Available from Sept. Email sfodk@sussex.ac.uk.

FLAT TO LET: Furze Hill, Hove. Two bedrooms plus dining/sitting room onto south-facing balcony, kitchen, bathroom. Sixth floor, in block with private grounds. £760 pcm incl. Contact John, email maystar@btinternet.com.

EARN MONEY: Participants wanted for easy and harmless psychology experiments. Each experiment pays £5. Ext. 7216 or email kristy@cohgs.susx.ac.uk.

ACCOMMODATION: PG wanted for shared house (with 3 other 2nd year PGs) in Park Crescent Road from Sep/Oct. £225 pcm, ex. bILLS. Email j.a.rother@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 8944 (Joeclyn or Matt) daytime, tel. 600442 eves.

Staff vacancies

Apply by 9 August
Temporary Clerk / Typist, Postgraduate Office (ref 217)

Apply by 10 August
Cleaner / Tea Person, EIT (p/t, ref 202b)

Lecturer in Philosophy of Cognitive Science, COGS (ref 210)

Apply by 13 August
Secretary, CCE (ref 221)

Clerical Assistants, CCE (ref 220)

Apply by 17 August
Research Fellow, Experimental Psychology (ref 205b)
Lecturer in Software Engineering, EIT (ref 216)

Apply by 24 August
Research Fellow, Sussex Centre for Neuroscience (ref 207b)
Research Officer, Poverty Research Unit (ref 204b)
Trainee Technician, MSU (ref 219)

Apply by 31 August
Research Officer / Fellow, EIT (ref 222)

For further details, see www.susx.ac.uk/Units/staffing/personnel/vacs or contact Staffing Services on (01273) 678706, fax (01273) 877401, email recruitment@susx.ac.uk.

Bulletin

The fortnightly Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Peter Simmons, with regular contributions from Jacqui Beiling. We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from staff and students of the University. The next issue will be out on 17 August, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 10 August. Please contact the Press and Communications Office in Sussex House on ext. 8888 or email Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.