The sociology of Christmas shopping

Done all your Christmas shopping yet? Or will you be one of the many people still frantically running round the shops on Christmas Eve?

Lucia Glover, a sociology student in SOC, is doing her final year project on the topic of Christmas shopping and examining the different ways people approach it.

"I'm trying to find out how people do their Christmas shopping and why they give particular gifts to certain individuals," says Lucia. "For example, I want to know if they differentiate between family and friends and whether they go out to shop with a plan or whether it's more spontaneous."

Lucia has been interviewing consumers of all ages, sexes and income groups including single mothers at a drop-in centre in Whitehawk in Brighton and asking them about their shopping habits.

"I'm expecting younger people perhaps to be more spontaneous when Christmas shopping, and also for those with lower incomes to have more of a fixed budget," explains Lucia.

"I've also been looking at differences between men and women in the way they shop, and I'm expecting women possibly to be more focused on what they are buying and maybe have planned their shopping more than men."

Lucia will re-interview the people after Christmas and see whether they were happy with how their Christmas shopping had gone.

"A project like this gives the students first-hand experience of collecting and analysing data themselves," says Lucia's sociology tutor, Dr Jenny Shaw. "It's a much steeper learning curve when they are doing hands-on research and learning as much by their mistakes as by their successes."

As for Lucia's own Christmas shopping habits, her studies and her forthcoming 21st birthday on 19 December are proving something of a distraction.

"I've been really bad this year," she admits. "Usually I'd have some ideas already but, since I've been doing this project, Christmas just makes me think of work!"

Bursaries for sporting success

Five outstanding students received bursaries on Tuesday (10 December) as part of a wider scheme to raise Sussex's profile as a sporting university.

The awards, run in association with the Alumni Office and professional sports teams, consist of £400 funding and special training privileges designed to help these students reach the top of their game. Results from the scheme, now in its second year, are encouraging.

History student Louise Aker, who received her second Sussex Sports Bursary at the ceremony, has become captain of the University hockey team and is a key member of the prestigious Lewes Hockey Club.

The campus hockey club has benefited not only from Louise's experience, but also from the Focus on Excellence scheme, which has helped the team go up a league nationally.

Focus on Excellence concentrates on the basketball and hockey clubs, providing them with coaching from teams such as Lewes Hockey Club to help them improve their performance and results. Like hockey, the campus basketball club climbed the league tables with the help of professional coaching.

Head of Sport Karen Dunster sees great potential in the two schemes: "Their aim is to make Sussex a real choice for students with a passion for sport."

Ciaran Brookes (left), from EIT, received a Sports Bursary last year for basketball and admits it was one of his main reasons for coming to Sussex: "It was a massive pull for me. Not only were the Brighton Bears based down here, but there was also this scheme where you could train and even play with them."

Formerly in the Ireland junior basketball squad, Carin had to persuade the Bears he could hack it and keep up with the pace. "It isn't an easy ride. If you want to really do well, you have to train six days a week at a really high standard. But this bursary does open doors and gives a good insight into how professional basketball is run." Ciaran now plays for Brighton Cougars after a torn ligament prevented him staying with the Bears.

At the moment the bursary scheme and the Focus on Excellence programme are limited, but Karen is hoping to expand the schemes: "Ideally we'll be able to support many more students and bring the standards of all our sports teams up."

This year's other bursary winners are Auriel Olissa, studying law, who has already been picked for National League basketball side Sussex Magic; Ranwick Irvine, doing an MPH in Development Studies, who is part of the England under-21 hockey side, law student Tim Garner, and Ryan Itchen in AFAS.
Collective action is good for you

"People should get more involved in campaigns, struggles and social movements – not only in the wider interest of social change, but also for their own personal good," argues a psychologist at Sussex.

Research led by Dr John Drury, Lecturer in Social Psychology in SOC, has found that not only does participation in protests and demonstrations have the potential to change the world: it is actually good for you.

This was one of the findings of a large-scale interview study of protest crowds and social movements, often known as 'collective action'.

"Many published activist accounts refer to feelings of encouragement and confidence emerging from experiences of collective action," says John. "But it is not always clear how and why such empowerment occurs, so we aimed to explain what factors within a collective action event contribute most to such feelings."

The study involved in-depth interviews with nearly 40 activists from a variety of backgrounds, in which over 160 collective action experiences were described. The range of events described by interviewees included traditional marches, fox-hunt sabotages, anti-capitalist street parties, environmental direct actions, industrial mass pickets – and even student occupations.

"The main factors we found to contribute to a sense of empowerment were the realization of the collective identity: the sense of movement, potential, unity and mutual support within a crowd," says John.

"However, what was also interesting was the centrality of emotion in the accounts. Empowering events were almost without exception described as joyous occasions. Participants experienced a deep sense of happiness and even euphoria in being involved in protest events. Simply recounting the events in the interview itself brought a smile to the faces of the interviewees." 

Psychologists have become increasingly interested in the role of positive experiences and emotions not just in making people feel good but also in promoting psychological and physical health. Uplifting experiences have been found to be associated with a variety of indicators of well-being, such as speed of physiological recovery, ability to cope with physical stressors; and the reduction of pain, anxiety and depression.

The Sussex study also involved Dr Chris Cocking and three Social Psychology students: Joseph Beale, Charlotte Hanson and Faye Rapley.
Dear Bulletin

Your front-page article from 29 November ('Howzat? Visually impaired student realises sporting dream') provides an opportunity to promote the work of the Primary Club, the cricketers' charity for the blind and partially sighted.

It is open to any cricketer in any class of cricket, and the only requirement is that you have been out first ball at least once (documentary proof not needed).

Former England bowler Derek Underwood is the club patron and Sunil Gavaskar, the only batsman to have been dismissed three times by the first ball of a test match (!!!), is an honorary member.

For membership details, write to the Primary Club, PO Box 12121, London NW1 9WS.

Dr Ulf Dantanu, Gothenburg University at University of Sussex

Dear Bulletin

Well, I suppose I must admire the news that Estates has obtained 'Welcome Host' status (Bulletin 29 November) and maybe it is time for me and others possibly to delete the rather nasty emails I have from them in my inbox.

Forgiveness is something our society struggles with and I feel I must applaud the downright audaciousness of Sarah Strupinski and the Staff Development Unit. Well done!

Mick Henry, CPES

Dear Bulletin

With reference to the article 'Expanding Europe's frontiers' (Bulletin 29 November), it is important to underline the contribution of the Sussex European Institute (SEI) to the EU's enlargement process over many years.

SEI staff, including the current Vice-Chancellor, Profs Helen Wallace, Jim Rollo, Peter Holmes and Jörg Monar, have each contributed in significant ways to the analysis of the process and also to its success. They also all still teach at the College of Europe's Warsaw campus and advise governments in the region on policy.

SEI over the years has trained countless students from central and eastern Europe, many of whom are themselves now contributing to policy-making in their countries. SEI stays in touch with as many as possible and already has many alumni in important posts in government (including a minister), embassies and business.

Through all these contacts over the last decade, the reputation of SEI and Sussex is extremely high throughout the ten countries now joining the EU, as well of course as in the EU itself.

Dr Alan Mayhew, Sussex European Institute

Dear Editor

I am writing to thank everyone on campus who contributed in any way to the recent Poppy Appeal. I have pleasure in reporting that, once again, the collection was up on the previous year. This time you and the villagers of Falmer and Stannery raised the magnificent sum of £754.75. Keep up the good work and, by the way, if you don't usually have a collection tin I am more than happy to accommodate you next year: just phone me on 644048.

Mrs D. George, Honorary Organiser, Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

Dear Editor

Thanks to everyone who came to the Carol Service on 8 December: a collection and the sale of mulled wine and mince pies after the service raised £384.70 for the Sussex Beacon, this year's charity.

Revd Dr Gavin Ashenden, University Chaplain

Sussex Direct pilot launches

Coming soon to a screen near you ... Sussex Direct is a personalised website for students and staff at Sussex that will provide online access to the information you need to work, study and socialise at the University.

The staff working on Sussex Direct have developed a pilot version that was launched to almost 100 members of staff last month. Their feedback will help the development team to design the first release of Sussex Direct and to select appropriate hardware.

The main functions supported by the pilot and the first release will be administrative. For example, the pilot enables staff to update their personal and academic profiles. It provides academic staff with access to details about their students as both cohorts and individuals. People who are teaching or studying a course also have access to relevant personalized information from the Library, such as reading lists.

The Sussex Direct team envisage rolling out the pilot to a selected group of students in the summer term. For students, the personalised online resources might include timetable and curriculum information, reading lists, round-the-clock access to online learning materials, and email. Online registration is also under development.

Dr Rose Luckin (COGS) will be facilitating a series of focus groups in the coming year and will be running usability studies to make sure that Sussex Direct is easy to use, consistent and supportive of users with special needs.

For further information on Sussex Direct, contact the project director, Dr Simon Shurville, on ext. 3317, email S.J.Shurville@sussex.ac.uk. You can also visit the project web site at www.sussex.ac.uk/sussexdirect.

Exploring the costs and benefits of online learning

As part of the Sussex Direct development, six projects are exploring the costs and benefits of delivering online learning using a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. These are a direct response to a questionnaire advertised in the Bulletin on 19 April that asked lecturers their opinions on online learning at Sussex.

The projects, which are being overseen by an Educational Technology Special Interest Group, include the natural, social and applied sciences and the humanities.

Detailed information online (www.sussex.ac.uk/sussexdirect/ online/vle-pilot-courses2002-3.shtml) explains what a VLE is and why lecturers may wish to consider employing it with their usual lectures and seminars to complement learning and teaching.

Evidence to date in two of the projects currently being run by Dr Kate O'Riordan in CCE and Dr Ben Adams in BIOLS indicates that this approach is very popular with students.

The Sussex Direct team are also working with the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU). Together they have hired an Educational Technologist, initially for one year, who will work from both offices.

For further information, particularly if you wish to evaluate and potentially use the VLE, contact Dr Tom Browne, Academic IT Support Manager in the Computing Service, or ext. 2967, email T.J.Browne@sussex.ac.uk.
100 not out

"Sussex is a diverse, multicultural community that aims to be open and welcoming to all those in society who can benefit from, or contribute to, university education and research ... We recruit students from a wide social and intellectual base and recognise their different attitudes, values and needs." (Strategy for Widening Participation 2001–2004).

Key elements of this strategy include ongoing work to improve the socio-economic and ethnic mix of the University's undergraduates — in other words, to increase the number of Sussex students from disadvantaged backgrounds and the number of non-white students.

One way to do this is through outreach work and 'inreach' work, to raise the aspirations of school pupils in areas of social deprivation. Widening Participation Officer, Jo Bishop, co-ordinates a number of events every term in conjunction with colleagues across campus.

If you are thinking about running your own event and would like further information about planning and marketing, contact Jo on ext. 3580 or email j.m.bishop@sussex.ac.uk.

The School of Biological Sciences celebrated a notable centenary on Monday (9 December) when sixth form students attended its 100th day school.

The aim of the day schools is to allow students to carry out practical science experiments on campus that they may not be able to do in their own labs because of a lack of resources.

"A teacher once asked me if they could borrow some electrical equipment but I had to say no because of the health and safety issues," says organiser Dave Randall. "In the bath that night I thought, 'If the equipment can't go to the students, why not bring the students into the University?'"

Since the day schools were first trialled in 1996, more than 1,800 local sixth formers have attended one, performing experiments including DNA fingerprinting, electron microscopy and gel electrophoresis.

Widening participation

Engineering Uncovered.

Some pupils had the task of solving a murder mystery on campus, while others explored the Universe. Other workshops covered topics such as pollution, DNA and stress analysis. Pupils then had the daunting task of making a presentation to their classmates on their particular workshop.

Alan Watts, Excellence Challenge Co-ordinator for Tower Hamlets, said: "The feedback from the students is really promising. The majority of them said they would consider university."

Among them was the teenager with celestial visions. She wrote on her feedback form: "The things I witnessed in this trip makes me believe university is the most strong and efficient ladder to a brighter future."

Another pupil wrote: "I cannot wait to go to university as the people showing us around made it sound so fun. I think your trip really helped me to get an understanding of higher education. Look out for me in 2007!"

Maths taster day

A maths taster day last month was so popular that Jo and the organisers in SMS were overwhelmed with the demand for places. Schools identified high-flying students who were well advanced in their maths (the majority had already taken their GCSEs and were due to start AS in Year 11) but also needed some encouragement to consider University as an option.

The schools were extremely positive about the event, which consisted of a range of practical workshops and lectures, aimed at extending the pupils' knowledge and understanding of maths at degree level.

Studying for sixth formers

Jo publicised an event for sixth formers using a comprehensive database of contacts in schools and colleges that she has built up over the past year.

Sixty students from inner city schools learnt about studying economics and management at university and found out what it is like to move away from home by talking to current undergraduates from similar backgrounds.

Teenagers from Tower Hamlets

"I found out that life at university is heaven. I saw lots of people and everyone looked very rapturous and relaxed. I always thought that everyone at university will be stressed and very worn out but I found out how wrong I was."

A teenager from Tower Hamlets gained this intriguing impression of university life during a campus visit this term. She was one of 75 Year 9 pupils from the London borough who took part in a one-day event entitled 'University and in three school leavers in the general population.

As well as a general insight into university life, the young people were given information on the
Update on building developments on campus

There's so much construction work going on at the moment, it can be tricky to keep track of what's what. To help you through the muddy maze, here's your Bulletin guide to the building site formerly known as the University of Sussex campus.

Construction work has begun on Blocks 3 and 4 of the Lewes Court campus residences, which will add a further 249 bed sitting rooms (all with en-suite bathrooms). Block 3 is due for completion in September, ready for occupation in the autumn term; and Block 4 is due for completion next December, for occupation in January 2004. A planning application will be submitted to Brighton and Hove City Council next spring for a further residential development in the North Field site.

Enabling works have begun to revamp level 3 of Bramber House and the main contract will commence in February. The area has been redesigned and will provide two large air-conditioned multi-function rooms (one of which can be sub-divided); three seminar rooms (two of which can be sub-divided); a redesigned bar and lounge area; and additional toilets.

The Brighton and Sussex Medical School building (left) is due for completion in June, and will receive the first 128 students next autumn. Subject to planning permission, work will begin next spring on a medical research building, for completion by April 2004. It will be located in the north-east corner of the BIOLS car park, in close proximity to the Medical School and south of the BIOLS Research 1 wing.

SPRU and the University of Brighton's Centre for Research in Innovation Management expect to move into the Freeman Centre (left) in March.

Phase 2 of the Innovation Centre (above) is due to support new high-tech businesses is due for completion this month, for occupation in January.

one2one with alumni

It's late at night and high in Bramber House, students are busily chatting away into their phones, swapping campus anecdotes. This isn't the Grapevine bar, however: it's the Alumni Office.

Anjum Saad, a Law finalist, has just been on the phone to Catherine, one of the infamous Jay twins (below) who encapsulated the height of fashion and glamour in the 1960s. "She loved it here," says Anjum. "I also talked to this other guy who was on the Sussex team for 'University Challenge'. The show he was on was one of only two in the series' history when Sussex actually won!"

These outpourings of memories are all part of the Alumni Office's 'Phonathon 2002'. Over the last few weeks, hundreds of Sussex graduates have been contacted by a team of nine students. Their role is to stimulate discussion about Sussex and find out how effective alumni services are.

Of course, while they're on the phone they also see if the former student would like to donate some money to the newly created Sussex Fund. This fund combines the fundraising activities for Sussex access bursaries, the student hardship fund, postgraduate support and the student welfare fund.

Alumni Officer Marina Pedreira-Vilarino (right), explains that phonathons are a regular feature at many universities and are very successful at proactively contacting former students and raising funds: "In a donation mail-out we might get only a 1 per cent response rate, but with the phonathon 20 per cent of people whom we contact give money there and then."

But is it all about the cash? "No; this isn't hard sell at all. We chat to the former students and find out really useful information about Falmer magazine and the alumni website. Some have come to CDEC to ask about the possibility of offering student placements or giving careers talks."

The scheme is still in its pilot stage, but Marina and her team at the Alumni Office are pleased with the results: "One of our student workers managed to get a one-off donation of £1,000 on his very first call!" And Catherine Boyd (nee Jay)? Anjum confides that "She gave a fair amount of cash in the end."

Applications to new Medical School for 2003 entry exceed all expectations

The number of applicants for places in the new Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS), scheduled to open in autumn 2003, has exceeded all expectations.

Almost 1,000 would-be doctors have applied for 128 places. Of these, 60 per cent are female and 29 per cent are mature students. There have been a total of nearly 60 applications from students on Access to Medicine courses around the country.

The proportions of male and female applicants are broadly in line with expectations from 2002 national data, while the proportion of mature applicants is above average, as might be expected for a new medical school.

The first nine of 12 planned Admissions Days have already been taken place, and 500 applicants will have been selected for interview by February.

Dean of the Medical School, Professor Jon Cohen, said: "We are obviously delighted and enormously encouraged by this response, which is a real vote of confidence in the kind of exciting and innovative curriculum we have designed.

"The applications have been of a very high standard, and we are looking forward to welcoming an interesting and diverse group of new medical students next October."
Groundsperson’s death was accidental

An inquest jury at Hove Crown Court has returned a verdict of accidental death on grounds-person Gary Bartoszek, who suffered massive head injuries in an incident last summer.

Gary sustained the injuries on 24 June when he leapt off a ride-on mower that he was driving across a campus car park. The coroner said there was nothing to suggest he had tried to kill himself by jumping off the mower.

Gary was an employee of Eacover Management Ltd (EML), which is contracted by the University to maintain the campus grounds. Before EML took on the contract in November 2000, he had worked for the University as a groundsperson for 18 years.

After Gary’s death on 1 July, his parents asked for his organs to be donated for transplant. His heart was given to a 66-year-old man, a kidney and his pancreas to a 38-year-old, the other kidney to a 21-year-old and his liver to a 42-year-old man.

His mother Jeanette told the Argus after the inquest on 2 December: “It is a great comfort to us that he was able to help others and in a way he lives on through them.”

Pedalling to pastures new

After 25 years of commuting to campus by bike, librarian Mike Lewis is pedalling off to pastures new.

Mike’s tall frame, and equally large bike (a Giant, of course!), have been a familiar sight on the A27 in all weathers. Averaging 200 journeys a year, at eight miles per return trip (from various points in Brighton and Hove over the years), he has clocked up a total of 40,000 miles.

As well as helping to save the environment, Mike reckons he’s saved over £5,000 in petrol costs. “I’ve also been spared a lot of aggro finding somewhere to park and getting off campus,” he adds.

Will he carry on cycling when he leaves the Library at Christmas? “I certainly will: it keeps you fit, and is by far the quickest way to get about. In the early days I made four journeys a day, as my son was at the Creche and I took him home at lunchtime. I now have grandchildren and I’m looking forward to taking them out on the back.”

He’s also toying with the possibility of something more ambitious: “If those 40,000 miles had been in a straight line, I could have cycled round the world a couple of times. Perhaps now I will!”

World AIDS Day

Africa performed at the Meeting House to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS.

Unisex, the University’s sexual health project, helped with many of the events and staged a sexual health pub quiz in Falmer Bar, where a treasure trove of naughty gifts was won by a team from the Students’ Union’s Activities Centre.

Encouragingly, Unisex has reported a significant rise in users of its service since it opened its large new drop-in centre in Falmer House.

The candlelit red ribbon made its beautiful yet poignant presence felt in Library Square this month to commemorate World AIDS Day.

Other events organised during the week included two club nights in town: one organised by the African, Caribbean and Asian Society; and another by new group Aid for Action, Action for AIDS.

The Umkhosi Singers (pictured right) from South

Royal Society fellow takes home new skills

When Dr Ashraf Assadi flies home to Iran next month, she will take with her many memories of Sussex. More importantly, her suitcase will also contain the new skills, experience and ideas she has gained during a six-month visiting research fellowship funded by the Royal Society.

Ashraf first visited Sussex in 2000 as part of her PhD programme at the University of Alzah in Iran. She worked in Professor Colin Eaborn’s organometallic chemistry group for eight months, producing two papers and showing exceptional ability and initiative.

Following the award of her doctorate, Ashraf was eager to gain postdoctoral experience abroad and Colin was more than happy to welcome her back: “She is an excellent scientist and her work here should also lead to further collaborations for the University,” he says.

Ashraf herself has gained many benefits during her time at Sussex, “in particular, experience of instrumental techniques that are not available to me in Iran, and being able to talk about the techniques with world-class experts”.

As well as appreciating the opportunity to work in a cutting-edge research environment, Ashraf has also valued the chance to work with colleagues from different cultures. “Exchanging views and ideas with people from different countries and backgrounds is a stimulating experience,” she says.

On her return to Iran, Ashraf will be able to contribute to raising standards in teaching and research at her university. “Theory can be read but is not a substitute for practical experience,” she explains.

Staff vacancies

Assistant Director, Human Resources (ref 520)
Departmental Coordinator, Arts Area (ref 529)
Apply by 3 Jan
Research Fellow, SPRU (ref 522)
Apply by 13 Jan
2 x Lecturer, SPRU (ref 522)
Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, SPRU (ref 526)
Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, SPRU (ref 530)
For further details, see www.sussex.ac.uk/units/staffing/personnel/vacancies or contact Staffing Services on ext. 8793, fax 877401, email recruitment@sussex.ac.uk.
Café culture

The Bulletin guide to eating and meeting on campus

Laines restaurant

With Christmas on the way, the Laines restaurant is putting on its traditional Yuletide lunch: turkey with all the trimmings and home-made dessert, all for under a fiver. As one diner put it: “It’s as good as a Christmas meal somewhere in town, and it’s less expensive.” Tuck in on Tuesday (17 December) between midday and 2.15pm.

The man behind the Laines restaurant has almost a quarter of a century’s experience cooking up meals for the campus masses. Derek Potter started his career in 1978 as an apprentice chef, becoming head chef in 1990.

Location

The Laines restaurant is the one opposite the Grapevine on the second floor of Bramber House. The Downs restaurant is on the first floor and specialises in light fare such as salads and jackets.

Ambience

It’s large and comfry, but could do with a bit of refurb as it is starting to look a little bit canteeney. The first thing to go should be the carpet – brown and pink just do not go! Despite this, however, it’s still a friendly and busy place – over 600 people enjoyed last Tuesday’s Christmas meal. Diners can admire the Spence arches, gaze out of the picture windows or marvel at the high-tech crockery conveyor belt.

Clientele

Students, staff and visitors all happily mix with one another in probably the most diverse meeting place on campus. So popular is it with international students, says Derek, that the menus have been designed to suit the more global palette.

Menu

“When I first started,” recalls Derek, “menus were very traditional, steamy, pudding-type affairs. Times have changed and now we have vegetarian and healthy options every day.” The Chef’s Special (£1.95) might be tandoori chicken with rice, or battered haddock lemon. International meals (£1.80) include chicken nasi goreng, with traditional British cuisine at £1.65. Cajun bean stew and other vegetarian dishes are £1.50.

Most popular dishes

“Curry is by far the most popular,” says Derek. The famous Curry Night on Thursdays, with meals at £1.80, is still packing them in. Home-made soups and “anything with chicken” are also firm favourites.

Facilities

Free water fountains, Coke and coffee machines, high chairs, and a licensed bar right next door! The Laines also has full disabled access.

Opening hours

Mon–Fri 12 noon–2.15pm; Thur also open 5.30–7.30pm.

A walk on the wild side

Christmas would not be complete without Mistletoe, so why, demanded our Editor, had we not mentioned it in our annual festive piece before?

Simple, we retorted: the Editor raps our knuckles whenever we stray off campus and there is no Mistletoe on campus – any more. The justification for this piece passed into history in 1991 when an Apple tree growing in the Tennant Lain Belt became a casualty of the general tidying-up that followed the 1987 storm.

Few plants are so engulfed by mythology as the Mistletoe. Making no contact with the earth, its semi-parasitic habit, remaining green and even fruiting when the rest of the world is leafless marked it out as a plant of special qualities. We inherit the familiar druidic association from Pliny’s account in the Historia Naturalis. The plant was cut from an Oak by priests clothed in white robes using a golden sickle. In fact Mistletoe on Oak is rare. The commonest host is cultivated Apple, followed by Lime, Poplar and Hawthorn. In Norse mythology, Mistletoe is famed as the wood from which Loki, the evil god of Fire, fashioned the arrow that killed Balder, the god of Light.

Mistletoe symbolism was discouraged by the early church but it was finding its way back into the mid-winter festivities by at least the 16th century. However, we have our Victorian ancestors to thank for resurrecting the Christmas tradition of kissing beneath the mistletoe.

Last year (Bulletin 14 December 2001) we described the association between the Robin and Christmas. A traditional rhyme links this familiar bird to another: “The Robin and the Wren, Are God Almighty’s Cock and Hen.”

The Wren is named after its short tail (wrenne in Middle English) but is in fact tiny all over, weighing as little as a pound coin.

Older readers will recall that a wren decorated the ‘tails’ side of our smallest coin, the farthing (one quarter of a real penny, about one tenth of a ‘new’ one). Only one thing about Wrens is large: their amazingly loud song, which can be heard throughout the year.

The association between Wrens and Christmas involved an extraordinary blood sport: the Wren Hunt that usually took place on St Stephen’s Day (26 December). Young men, or Wren Boys, armed themselves with heavy sticks called ‘libbets’, which were hurled at the unfortunate ‘king of the birds’. The corpse was placed in a decorated ‘Wren House’ or ‘Wren Bush’, and paraded from house to house. Often the body was gradually plucked as the feathers were distributed as charms against witches. The Wren Boys made great play of their ‘heavy’ burden, and often begged for money to ‘bury the bird’. Although local pubs received most of the money, the Wren was indeed often buried in a corner of the churchyard at dusk.

We wish everyone a peaceful, libbett-free holiday.

Below: Mistletoe’s most common hosts are Lime, Poplar and Hawthorn trees.
Bulletin board

Christmas and New Year campus opening hours

Minimum service days
21 Dec–1 Jan incl.

Catering
Falmer Bar/Hothouse
Closed 14 Dec–5 Jan incl.

East Slope Bar
Closed 15–22 Dec and 24–26 Dec. Open 23 Dec 11am–11pm. Open 27 Dec onwards with normal hours. (If building work on East Slope Bar is not completed by 23 Dec, Park Village Lounge bar will open instead.)

Park Village Lounge Bar
Open every day until 22 Dec. Closed 23 Dec–5 Jan (but will remain open if building work persists at East Slope Bar).

Grapevine, Bramber House
Closed 14 Dec–5 Jan.

Coffee Shop, Bramber House
Open 16–18 Dec and 2–3 Jan: 8.30am–4.30pm; 19–20 Dec: 8am–2pm.

The Bolthole, Library

EURO, BIOLS Common Rooms
Open 16–20 Dec and 2–3 Jan: 9am–4pm (2pm on Fri 20 Dec).

CCS, EAM Common Rooms
Open 16–20 Dec and 2–3 Jan: 11am–2pm.

AFR4S Common Room
Closed 14 Dec–5 Jan incl.

Library
Open 16-19 Dec, 2–3 Jan: 9.00am–5.30pm (7.30pm on Tue 17 Dec); 20 Dec: 9.00am–2.00pm. Closed weekends until 5 Jan.

Health Centre
Open 9am–5pm weekdays throughout vacation (including Saturdays 10am–12 noon) except closed Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year’s Day.

Sportcentre
Closed from 1pm 20 Dec.

Falmer Sports Complex
Closes at 1pm 20 Dec. Open weekends of 21–22 and 28–29 Dec: 9am–6pm.

Small ads

TO LET: 2 double bed house in Hanover C/H, D/G. Available from mid Jan. £700 pcm. Call Chris on 69/7539.

FOR SALE: Various Playstation games, £5 each. Nintendo 64: 1 controller, 1 rumbler pack, 1 memory card, 2 games, £25 ono. Selection of Brio, £5–£10. Rabbit run, approx. 5x3 ft, £10 ono. Contact Wendy Doyle on 2841 or 01903 201391.

FOR SALE: Lange X99 ski boots, size 7, £30; ladies’ ski pant 12/14 £5; medium ski jacket (unworn) £10. PS1 games: Final Fantasy 7, 8, 9; Colin Mac Rae Rally — £5 each. Ext. 8022, email A.Drew@Sussex.ac.uk

TO LET: Room in shared flat in Park Crescent for staff or PG. £350pcm. Tel. 605147.

WANTED: Room in shared house for 25-yr-old Swedish female Erasmus student from 1 Jan for 6 months in B’ton or Hove. Email k.skoglund@home.se.

TO LET: Mature lodger required for college in Chalvey. Own room and share of all facilities, P+T/weekly/term-time only arrangement suitable. (No retainer for holiday period.) Car required as 2 mins to campus. Use of small garden - no maintenance. Tel. 01666 881302.

TO LET: Double bedroom in house nr London Rd station, with 3 friendly females. Available mid Jan. £255 pcm excl. Staff/PG only. Tel. 560014.

FOR SALE: Macintosh Powerbook G3 laptop: 400MHz, 128MB memory, 4GB hard disk, 56K modem, £90. 20’ Macintosh Multiscan monitor, £110. Both together £680. Olympus Camcorder SLR C-1400 digital camera, with 8MB SmartMedia card, £120. Contact Lyndsay Hiller on 07977 471118 or lyndsay@freeemail.fr.

FOR SALE: Corolla hatchback, F reg/89, low miles, MoT Feb, tax till Jan. £1,000. Tel. 556108.

TO LET: 2-bed ground-floor flat nr Lewes station. £650pcm. Email d.osorio@Sussex.ac.uk

WANTED: Room in house/flat 6 Jan–15 March. Pref. B’ton. Socrates male student, N/S. Email tal20091@sg.huw.wlv.ac.uk.

WANTED: Two oil-filled electric radiators, one large (with timer) and one small. Still under guarantee. £60 for both. Contact Jean on ext. 3777 or 698696.

WANTED: Witnesses to minor accident on Fri 22 Nov, about 3.30pm at entrance to DDSG car park, between small white van and blue Ford Fiesta – reg SJU 706. Email naseemvora@hotmail.com

WANTED: Curator with room to let in own house in Oxfordshire seeks temp accomm from Jan, pref B’ton/Hove. Email hml@bodley.ox.ac.uk.

WANTED: Researcher to help set up/conduct focus groups and analyse data, for research by Brighton Body Positive on HIV prevention and support needs of local black/ethnic community. Tel. Ogo Chime on 635226.

FOR SALE: Nearly new Packard-Bell PC, 16GHz, with 17” monitor, CD-RW, printer, modem, Windows XP, office software, £600 ono. 14” colour TV/VCRC, £100 ono. Ext. 2010, email rlipsch@cats.ucsc.edu, call 475855.

FOR SALE: Giant Boulder mountain bike. 23.5” frame, 21 speed, 2 years old. £75. Email j.a.reiter@Sussex.ac.uk

TO LET: Large, split level, 1-bed furnished flat nr Palmira Sq, Hove. WM/dyer, GCH. £520 pcm. Available 25 Dec. Email c.vale@Sussex.ac.uk.

Gardner Arts Centre
Box office: (01273) 685861 www.gardnerarts.co.uk

Performance
Until Sat 4 Jan
Various times
The Jungle Book
Rudyard Kipling’s timeless classic, brought vividly to life in a musical adaptation by Mike Carter. This colourful production will delight children of all ages from 4 upwards.

Exhibitions
Until Sun 12 Jan
Same Sky – Creative Climates: Themes Around Jungle Book
Four artists working with four Brighton & Hove schools to produce a combined installation on the theme of Jungle. This show will include 3D, 2D and video material and will have participatory elements.

Bulletin

The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field (below), Peter Simmons (left) and Benedict Brook (right). We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from staff and students of the University. The next issue will be out on 10 January, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 3 January. Please contact the Press and Communications Office in Sussex House on ext. 6888 or email Bulletin@Sussex.ac.uk.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers!
Supporting students through transition

Sussex students who are not graduating this year came to a university with one academic structure and will leave a university with quite a different structure. For example, an anthropology student in the existing School of African and Asian Studies will next academic year be part of a Department of Anthropology in the new School of Social Science and Cultural Studies.

However, while the organisation of the Schools will change, the academic and social arrangements that students have become used to should continue much as before. Moreover, the new Schools provide the opportunity to improve the welfare and support that they receive.

Whatever the benefits of the new systems, the transition can of course be unsettling for current students. Dr Mary Stuart, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor responsible for the 'student experience', said: "It is important that we plan to provide the best support we can and give students the most up-to-date information about the new Schools as they develop."

She added: "Students will experience continuity in a context of change - and any change should be for the better. The University will ensure that the student experience is of a high quality and that no student's degree programme will be disrupted."

Academic programmes from 2003-04

Although the School structures are changing, current students are not facing wholesale changes to their academic programmes. The programme they are currently taking (including any school courses) will be delivered as described in the current syllabus, but within the new School structure from 2003-04 onwards.

The new programmes and degree combinations that have been developed, particularly in the arts, are being offered to students starting for the first time in 2003-04.

Which students will be in which Schools

Students will clearly need to know which School they will be part of from 2003. This depends on their major subject. A list of all degree programmes and the Schools they will be part of is available on the web but, broadly speaking, the majors will be allocated as follows.

Humanities
Majors: American Studies, Art History, English, European Drama, History, Linguistics and English Language, Modern Languages, Music, Philosophy

Life Sciences
Majors: Biochemistry, Biology, Biomolecular Science, Chemistry, Ecology and Conservation, Environmental Science, Human Sciences, Molecular Genetics, Neuroscience, Psychology

Science and Technology
Majors: Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence, Engineering, Information Technology and Computer Systems, Mathematics and Statistics, Physics and Astronomy

Social Science and Cultural Studies
Majors: Anthropology, Economics, Geography, International Relations, Media Studies, Politics, Sociology

Sussex Institute
Majors: Cultural Studies (CCE), Education, Landscape Studies (CCE), Law, Management Studies, Social Work and Social Care

The full list is available at www.sussex.ac.uk/USIS/newschools.

Intermission arrangements

Students taking a break from study this academic year and intending to return in 2003-04, or later years, should be aware that the creation of new Schools and the new arts syllabus will make that less straightforward than usual, because many existing programmes are being replaced with new ones.

Students may therefore need to transfer on return to a new programme. In the first instance, they should seek advice and guidance from their current School on what the options might be.

For details of the arrangements, see www.sussex.ac.uk/USIS/newschools. Jim Guild, Assistant Registrar (Exams) ext. 3819 can provide further advice and information.

Graduate studies

This pull-out has focused on the needs of and support for undergraduate students.

Next term the Bulletin will provide more information about graduate studies in the new Schools and the postgraduate experience.

Update on support staff

School Administrator posts have been advertised to a ring-fenced group and discussions will take place with applicants on 16 and 17 December in order to match individuals to specific posts within the new Schools.

Any posts unfilled after this stage of the process is complete will be advertised in January and applications will be welcome from any member of the University.

Significant progress has been made on agreeing the functional structure for clerical and administrative staff within the new Schools. The next stage – agreeing the balance of School and Departmental functions and more detailed design of posts – will take place between now and the end of January. There will be an open meeting in late January for all those affected directly.

The timetable for developing the structures, posts and detailed job descriptions, and for transferring current staff into new roles, has been revised. School Administrative Managers are working with staff from Human Resources; the revised timetable will allow for wider consultation and the full participation of the new School Administrators, and Technical Services Managers where relevant.

Late Dec 2002-end Jan 2003

Detailed development of clerical and administrative structures on a School by School basis, identifying the number and type of posts in each School

Feb 2003

Mapping of existing staff against new roles; identification of staff development needs to help support staff making the transition

Mar 2003

Development and refinement of individual job descriptions and consultation with post-holders

The two Technical Services Managers, Malcolm Strong (Science and Technology) and Chris Leech (Life Sciences), are currently working on an organisational chart for technical services in these Schools, in consultation with faculty. It is anticipated that a draft structure will be available, for wider consultation, next term.

The planned review of IT support in the new Schools will be undertaken when the new Director of the University Computing Service has been appointed.
Student support arrangements

The current personal tutor and welfare arrangements will continue to offer support for this academic year. The new Schools will provide support and advice for 2003–04.

In developing the new Schools, staff are looking to improve and strengthen the current student support arrangements. There will be a senior academic in each new School with specific responsibility for student support and welfare issues. This Director of Student Support is a new post; the postholder will have a key management role within the School, with a primary focus on the development of policies and strategies for student support and retention.

A critical element of School-based student support will be the personal tutoring system, which is being restructured to provide consistent support, more closely linked to the academic focus of students. The Director of Student Support will be working closely with the Heads of Departments in the School to ensure the delivery of effective personal tutoring.

Plans are also being developed for Programme Convenors so that it will be easier for students to identify the key person responsible for their degree programme.

Student Advisors

One of the key features of student support in the new Schools will be the increase in the number of Student Advisors. There are currently nine Student Advisors within the University and they will shortly be joined by several more, as – under the new arrangements – each School will have at least two advisors in post.

Student Advisors offer a frontline service to undergraduate and postgraduate students within the School, providing advice on a range of personal, financial or academic issues and playing a key role in such activities as induction and peer mentoring. They work closely with the central support services, to whom they refer students as appropriate.

From August, all the Student Advisors will be professionally responsible to the Head of Student Support, Sue Yates. According to Sue, "The restructuring provides us with a real opportunity to strengthen our support services within the academic units. We can build upon existing good practice and offer a well-co-ordinated and professional service to all our students."

Humanities: Jacqui Poiris, EAM (top left), Roseanne Wilding, EURO (above, 2nd left)
Life Sciences: Rachel Gould, BIOLS (above, 3rd left), Jane Jauncey, BIOLS (above, 4th left), Lucy Solomom, SOC (above, 5th left)
Science and Technology: Tessa Hodsdon, CEGS (top right)
Social Science and Cultural Studies: Martin Kirby, AFRAS (bottom left), Hilary Lawson, CCS (bottom, 2nd left)
Sussex Institute: Mary Hoar, CCE (bottom right)

New recruits complete the team of School Administrative Managers

With the arrival of Laura Flynn this month, the team of School Administrative Managers for the five new Schools is now complete.

Laura Flynn (Life Sciences) and Jacqueline Clarke (Science and Technology) came to their new posts from senior administrative roles in other higher education institutions. So what are their first impressions of Sussex?

"The University has a friendly, welcoming feel," says Jacqueline. "The social interaction (particularly between staff and students) is very visible, especially in tea bars and communal spaces. This has certainly helped me to get to know people more easily." Laura is keen to introduce herself to everyone in the new School of Life Sciences – both staff (of which there will be 480), and a representative number of students – to hear their views on the new School structure.

"I am looking forward to working with administrative, technical and academic colleagues and I am already working closely with the Dean, Professor Jonathan Bacon, and the other School Administrative Managers," she says.

Both women are optimistic and enthusiastic about the changes being undertaken at Sussex, while recognising the challenges of transition. "The University has undertaken a significant programme of change which is ambitious and achievable, but undoubtedly challenging," says Jacqueline.

"The transitional period can initially be unsettling due to inevitable uncertainty about the future, but it does also open up exciting possibilities for developing our jobs and the work we do here."

Laura and Jacqueline are both keen to minimise uncertainty about the changes through transparency, consultation and communication. To contact Laura, email her on L.M.Fynn@sussex.ac.uk, or call ext. 7052/2699. Jacqueline is available on ext. 2904, email J.A.Clarke@sussex.ac.uk.