Lions' pride in arithmetic

Lions can count, a Sussex scientist told the British Association Festival of Science last month.

"I wouldn't want to call it counting in the way humans count, but it's clear that there is some sort of important numerical ability," says experimental psychologist Dr Karen McComb, who has carried out extensive research among lions in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park.

She discovered that lions can assess their own group size and compare it to the number of rivals that are approaching, and then adapt their behaviour accordingly.

To test the lions' numerical skills, Karen played recordings of other lions' roars from hidden loudspeakers, then watched the reaction.

The experiments showed very clear differences in reactions, depending on the number of individuals roaring from the loudspeaker and the size of the approaching group. Karen found that the lions were likely to approach the sound only if they had at least a two to one numerical advantage over the simulated intruders.

"This involves making a quite complicated assessment based on relating the number of lions in your own group to the number of roaring intruders," she says.

"What is particularly interesting is that in doing this they are likely to be integrating information gained from at least two different sensory modalities: the number of intruders must be judged solely on acoustic cues (from the playback), but information on their own group size is probably derived from visual cues."

The reason for counting varied according to the sex of the lions, Karen found. Females use their numerical ability to determine how many potential rivals are roaring back at them from competing groups. Males, however, quantify the size of groups of females to weigh up whether to try and take over the pride.

"If it's one female roaring they'll actually come very quickly," she told the BBC radio programme 'Science in Action'. "They'll almost run towards the loudspeaker, they're so interested in the female, but if there are three of them they'll come much more slowly and be much more cautious." Karen's findings about lions are in accordance with separate research on other animals such as chimpanzees, leading to the suggestion that social mammals are born with basic numeracy (the ability to distinguish 'less' from 'more'). And that means lions are helping scientists to learn more about the way human brains deal with numbers.

Bright young minds meet top policy researchers

Gifted and talented teenagers met last week (23 September) with top science policy researchers at Sussex to discuss how the government could handle issues such as GM crops and biological warfare.

More than 60 pupils from schools across the south-east attended the Gifted and Talented Conference at the Freeman Centre, a new international centre of research excellence that brings together SPRU - Science and Technology Policy Research at the University of Sussex and CEPRIM, the Centre for Research in Innovation Management from the University of Brighton.

The young people were introduced to a range of subjects on which researchers are currently working, including biological warfare, environmental issues, and creativity and innovation. They were given access to web resources and journal articles to support their discussions and debates, and met researchers and students in the science, technology and innovation policy field of study.

Professor Ben Martin, director of SPRU, said: "The idea was to excite school children about issues in science and technology research, and for our researchers to hear some fresh perspectives."

The Freeman Centre, named after SPRU's founder Professor Christopher Freeman, accommodates 200 people and is one of the first buildings on the Sussex campus to feature low-energy ventilation and heating systems.

"Our new building has given us more space and better facilities for holding this kind of event," said Ben. "We want to be able to interact with a wide range of groups outside academia."
Nationalist myths

Why is the British National Party being taken so seriously by the media? Has democratic America become the ultimate imperial nation? How does the gender of Palestinian suicide bombers influence the press coverage they receive? These are some of the questions that will be addressed at a conference organised by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies, in London from 22–23 October.

Academics, journalists and policy makers from more than 20 different countries will explore the recycling of age-old racial and religious prejudices in an age of globalisation and mass media. The conference includes panels on historical revisionism, Holocaust denial, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, racist rhetoric, and ‘democratic discourse’, and participants will analyse these themes in the media of newsprint, film, television, radio and the internet.

Keynote speakers include Gerry Gable, founder of the anti-fascist journal Searchlight; former New York Times correspondent David Binder; Franziska Außgen, editor of the Süddeutsche Zeitung; and Tanya Lokshina, executive director of Russian human rights organization the Moscow Helsinki Group. Dr Stephen Burman, the new Dean of Humanities, will talk about the media myths surrounding American foreign policy.

The conference comes at the mid-point of a two-year project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) and headed by Professor Edward Timms of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies.

"While the research project focuses on post-Soviet Russia and post-unification Germany, modern media transcends national boundaries, so we decided to look at nationalist rhetoric in a global context during this conference," says Dr Stella Rock, one of the conference organisers.

Stella’s paper explores the nationalist campaign for the canonisation of Rasputin that is currently being waged in the Russian media.

Dr Jan Herman Brinks, who researches German nationalism for the AHRB project, will give a paper on the ‘Anne Frank myth’. Other Sussex participants include Petra Weber and Fred Davies.

For details of the conference, contact Tiziana Tomma (t.tomma@sussex.ac.uk) or see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/cgs/conference/About_the_Conference.html.

Science becomes art

How can the activity of neurotransmitters in the brain be translated into art? What does the behaviour of cuttlefish tell us about natural design and transformation? Two leading scientists at Sussex are collaborating with artists in a new national scheme to help bridge the divide between science and the arts.

Neuroscientist Professor Michael O’Shea and geneticist Dr Robert Whittle have each been awarded prestigious research fellowships by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) and Arts Council England for projects that will lead to an artistic interpretation of their work.

Michael and his research team are working with Norwegian artist Sol Snelvedt, who will turn her understanding of the scientific imagery of brain activity into an audio-visual art installation.

"As scientists, we understand how the brain works in terms of microscopic processes," says Michael. "But we don't know how that relates to what the brain can do. Sol will be using our scientific images to explore this link between the brain as a machine and the unlimited scale of human thought."

Robert is studying the genetics of animal patterning but there are four other research groups involved in the project. The topics range from the molecular biology of the assembly of nanofibres to the way cuttlefish make patterns on their body surface as camouflage or to attract mates.

Visual artist Heather Barnett, who has worked with science professionals in previous art collaborations, will take part in laboratory activities with the five research groups. She will use photography and other image-based approaches to explore the themes of design and metamorphosis.

Robert says: "The advantage for us of having Heather here is that it may give us new insights into the work that we do and may provoke us to think about other issues." The two fellowships, which are among just 16 awarded to universities in England, are for one year. Funding ranges from £22,000 to £35,000.

Teaching and Learning Conference

The University’s second Teaching and Learning conference takes place on 5 November. The theme this year is ‘assessment’.

Professor Graham Gibbs from the Open University will deliver the keynote address, entitled “Does Your Assessment Support Student Learning?”. Three parallel workshop sessions will be led by Professor Lewis Elton, (UCL), Professor Roger Murphy (Nottingham) and Dr John Pryor (Sussex).

For the full programme, see www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/TLDU. To register, email Jannie Roed (JRoed@sussex.ac.uk) at TLDU by 10 October.
Science focus for new PVC

The successful revamp of the arts curriculum has brought in a large number of high-quality undergraduates who started at Sussex this week. The University's newest Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dr Evelyn Welch, is now responsible for leading an overhaul of the science curriculum.

The quality of science entrants this year is high, but some subjects have had their lowest undergraduate numbers for many years. Many science departments are already looking at what they offer to seek to address this. Evelyn makes clear that her work is meant to provide greater central focus, support and direction: "The challenge for Sussex is to build on the real strengths of science here. This is about making sure the curriculum remains contemporary and attractive, developing for example cross-disciplinary programmes that have always been a great strength at Sussex."

Improving the structure of the curriculum could also help to deliver more balanced teaching loads and support increased research activity. But it is about more than getting the right curriculum. The project will also look at the other factors affecting recruitment, such as the clarity of what the University offers; the way it seeks and handle applications; and what potential students make of Sussex when they visit, for example the quality of the science teaching facilities. As Evelyn says, "That means looking outwards to our competitors and potential students who are currently going elsewhere. A key task now is to undertake good, focused market research about what students want from a science degree and why they may choose other universities over Sussex."

It will then take a year to "construct the right package to appeal to the many students who don't currently come to Sussex," as Evelyn puts it. The prospectus for 2006 entry goes to press 18 months from now, so the venture is on a very tight timetable. Sam Riordan, who worked for a number of years in the former School of Biological Sciences, will be managing the project to make sure that it remains on schedule.

As part of the process, the Deans of the Schools of Life Sciences and Science & Technology will set up brainstorming groups to elicit curriculum ideas. There will also be a 'reference group' consisting of students, employers, technicians and support staff, who will give their views on curriculum proposals before definite decisions are taken.

"This is not a dumbing-down exercise," insists Evelyn, who says that the aim is to attract high-quality science students with good A levels and to "produce a strong story about science at Sussex."

While this is clearly a major undertaking, Evelyn will in fact be responsible for teaching and learning across the entire curriculum during the three years of her appointment as a Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

She is very much looking forward to working with the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU) on e-learning at the University, as well as innovations in teaching and learning styles more generally. "This means really rethinking how students learn, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level," explains Evelyn, who is concerned not to lose sight of postgraduate issues and will continue to supervise research students alongside her new responsibilities.

She will also be working closely with the Partnership Office, which has several new members of staff, and has already commissioned a strategic review of all partnership arrangements (with local colleges) to inform the direction for Sussex over the next decade.

"The strategic vision for the University's future is a positive one," she enthuses, "and I am delighted to be part of it. I am looking forward to working with dynamic colleagues across the University."

Dr Evelyn Welch ...

• ... came to Sussex in 1994 from London University's Warburg Institute
• ... was Subject Chair of History of Art 2000-03
• ... is a specialist in Italian Renaissance art and culture
• ... has an intriguingly titled book coming out next year on Shopping in the Renaissance
• ... is the parent of six children aged between 10 and 20, and comes to work "for a rest"
• ... started a three-year term as a Pro-Vice-Chancellor in mid September
• ... believes "It's very important that women are given – and take – the opportunity to do these senior-level jobs."

Equality and diversity: key to change

The University is keeping up the pace on the equalities agenda for both staff and students with the appointment by the Vice-Chancellor of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor John Dearlove as the new lead for equalities.

John welcomes this new role with "enthusiasm and a commitment to lead strategically on this vital change agenda for the University." "Equality and diversity is central to all that we do in university life," he adds, "and the challenge to mainstream equality into all of our policies and procedures is one that we all share, both staff and students."

John chairs the Equal Opportunities Working Group, which meets once per term and is charged with implementing the recommendations of the Equality Challenge Unit report; monitoring targets and action plans in relation to areas such as race and disability; and reporting to Council and Senate.

Liz Burchett, Diversity and Equality Officer, has moved from the Human Resources division to the Secretariat to enable greater more on student issues from a strategic and corporate position. Her role is to support staff and monitor initiatives related to equality across student and staff areas, ensuring the University is complying with the whole range of legislative requirements. An example of this is the new UK legislation in relation to religion and sexual orientation, which will come into force on 1 December.

The new equality and diversity web pages at www.sussex.ac.uk/central/equality.shtml contain information on University policies as well as guidance for staff and information for students. There is also a link to the disability pages for students and staff.

The web pages are being launched with a competition for staff and students, with cash prizes of £125, £75 and £50. The competition will close on 10 November and the Vice-Chancellor will select the winners on 1 December. Email Liz Burchett on EJ.R.Burchett@sussex.ac.u.k or visit the site for more information on how to enter.

And don't forget to contact Liz if you want to join the equalities@sussex email network.
Jacqui Bealing
Press Officer

Welcome to all new students and staff on campus: I’m keen to broadcast your news, so give me a call on ext. 7437 or email press@sussex.ac.uk if you have any research findings, upcoming events and/or achievements to report.

Dr Andy Medhurst, Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies, was one of the expert voices appearing back in August on ‘Cotter Culture’, a BBC Radio 2 series looking at the influence of gay culture on British pop music.

Dr Karen McComb’s research on lions’ numerical ability (see page 1) was covered (11 September) by newspapers including the Scotsman, Yorkshire Post and Eastern Daily Press.

BBC Online reported the initial findings of a research project led by psychologist Dr Robin Banerjee on its education pages (15 September). Children rejected by their classmates for being aggressive are often the most socially anxious, the study has found.

Dr Janet Stuart told the Times Educational Supplement (26 September) about the “high degree of ignorance, xenophobia and covert racism among” school pupils in the south-east. Janet is co-author of a new report that says shocking levels of racist abuse are aimed at overseas teachers.

And most recently, students who had been on campus for just a few days enjoyed their five minutes of fame on BBC Online (1 October). Alastair Geddes said, “It’s been really good. So far, everyone’s been really friendly. I think being at this place will make me more confident and able to do things on my own.”

BBC Online intend to revisit the Sussex freshers at the end of each term to find out how they are getting on.

The first year students wandering around campus registering and signing up for hundreds of societies are probably unaware that the university they are entering is a very different place to, even, six months ago.

The creation of the new schools has marked a turning point in Sussex’s direction. However, this year many other plans and initiatives have also borne fruit – from beefed-up student welfare to Sussex Direct.

Over the next few weeks the Bulletin will be taking a look at the new developments occurring all over campus in our series of Campus Fresh reports.

We start by talking to the people behind this year’s massive freshers’ programme, and we also take a look at the innovative online registration system that should dramatically cut down on bureaucracy for new students.

Hoping freshers go wow

Adele Burrows is stressed. As Sports and Activities Officer of the Students’ Union, it is her job to oversee a slew of events during freshers’ week. But she’s still smiling despite the daily deadlines. Maybe the fact she used to run the University’s extreme sports club has helped.

The 21-year-old Geography and Development Studies student began her year as a USSU Sabbatical officer in July. She had begun thinking about freshers’ week way before that, though: “Before I took over, I organised focus groups with 52 different societies to discuss what they wanted from freshers,” says Adele.

She then took the results and ideas to Shell Morgan, who oversees freshers’ week, and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Dr Mary Stuart to discuss what was feasible. “I think the University and Union work really well together on freshers. The University organise the large induction procedures and then smaller events for specific groups, such as international students. We try and do events which encompass the whole of campus and all students together.”

Part of the Students’ Union plan this year has been to hold several non-alcohol based events during the evening to give first years a choice of what to attend. Yesterday (Thursday), for instance, there was a cultural festival as well as the classic pub crawl. The freshers’ ball is being held today (Friday) in a series of interconnecting music tents, which proved popular last year.

Meanwhile, the real highlight was Tuesday’s freshers’ festival, which replaced the freshers’ fairs: “Rather than having a sports fair on one day and societies on another, we’ve done it all in one go to break down barriers between groups,” explains Adele. For the first time, non-Students’ Union academic societies were encouraged to attend.

How does Adele hope first years have found her freshers’ events? “We want the week to emphasise, without being cheesy, the Sussex community and make freshers feel comfortable being here. I hope they go ‘wow’!”

ABOVE: Adele Burrows at the freshers’ festival outside Falmer House.

The whole induction

Shell Morgan is surrounded. By posters, papers, booklets, walkie-talkies and portable noticeboards. A colleague pops in with piles of booklets hot off the press. A few minutes later Space Planning Officer Liz McVeigh interrupts, delivering to a grateful Shell huge, colourful maps of campus showing where all the new schools are.

Shell is the main co-ordinator for this week’s freshers’ events. From registration to the VC’s tea parties, the ball to the banners, Shell has had her hand in them all. “Today I’ve been running around campus putting signs out and posters up just so students know where they are going,” she says breathlessly.

Thankfully, she has a helper in former Students’ Union President Ross Hall, who is co-ordinating student welcome teams: “These guys are on the help desks and roam around schools picking up lost students and acting very much as trouble shooters,” explains Shell.

Shell has based freshers’ week around a system of eight ‘strands’. These are eight compulsory events that students must attend, including departmental welcomes and tours, ICT and Library introductions and personal tutor meetings.

“There is one event in the
Cutting out the queues

A University tradition has come to end. The registration queue, a tedious rite of passage for every new student, has been banished to the history books.

Previously, Bramber House played host to thousands of freshmen paying their fees and rent, collecting their registration card and carrying out all manner of other bureaucratic essentials. However, this year, all students have had the opportunity to do the whole process from the comfort of their own home on the Internet.

"In America they've been doing it for a while," explains Registration Officer, Tim May, "but in the UK, although many have talked about it, only Sussex and the Open University have actually managed to put registration online."

Simon Shurville, Project Director of Sussex Direct, oversaw the system's creation. "The aim," he explains, "is to speed the process up and make it easier for students. But it also greatly lessens the effects of registration on colleagues around campus who had to do everything by hand on the day."

As students go online they receive their University password, which stays with them throughout their studies. They then have a checklist of areas to complete, from personal contacts to student loans and paying their rent.

thing. Sorted.

morning and one in the afternoon every day, which leaves plenty of gaps for the uniqueness of departments and schools to come through. Physics, for instance, have space to fit in health and safety training. It also provides a good balance of social and academic activities.”

Part of the key to the success of freshmen’s week is communication. Academics and support staff received a guide this year so everyone knows what is happening.

While Shell agrees that her job may possibly be one of the most manic on campus at the moment, she realises she isn't alone in building up to the start of term: “An awful lot of people across campus pull out all the stops to make this thing work. I just co-ordinate but these are the guys who have to deliver.”

Dear Editor

The public inquiry into the proposed South Downs National Park (SDNP) will get under way in November. As readers probably know, the boundary that has been put forward excludes the University of Sussex campus, even though this falls within the present Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (which stands to be revoked when the SDNP comes into being).

I believe there are several good arguments for including the University within SDNP (and inclusion in a national park would certainly enhance the University's prestige). I shall be appearing at the inquiry to make this case.

It would be most helpful if any readers of the Bulletin with views on the matter – for or against – would get in touch with me (Arts B; email c/o lafb01@sussex.ac.uk), letting me know any specific reasons.

Professor Robin Milner-Gulland
Modern Languages, Hums

Dear Bulletin

The University seems to have been engaged in an orgy of waste over the summer. Dozens, if not hundreds, of perfectly serviceable desks, tables, bookshelves, etc. have been thrown away to be replaced by new office furniture that, in my view, is aesthetically less pleasing and certainly of inferior quality to that being dumped.

What is being discarded is for the most part good, solid furniture in keeping with the design and period of the Arts blocks; what is being brought in, no doubt at great expense, is of a colour, shape and firmness that do not match the interior harmony of the offices and spaces in which we work.

I am informed that most of the furniture is just smashed up and disposed of. What a waste, especially at a time when university finances are reported to be tight and when, a year or so ago, the VC was on record as saying that co-location of the new Arts departments (alongside which much of the refurbishment is taking place) would not be a priority because it would be too expensive!

Professor Russell King
Geography, SocCul

LEFT: The student-facing interface of the new online registration system. Part of Sussex Direct, the simple-to-navigate web site enables students to complete every aspect of registration. All they need to do when they arrive on campus is go to Bramber House to pick up their student cards.

BELOW: Shell Morgan (centre), crouching) surrounded by members of the University welcome team. This year there were more students than ever helping freshers settle in.
Easier access to the Electronic Library

Access to the many electronic journals, databases and other electronic resources available from the Library has just become much easier.

Until recently, special user names and passwords were needed to access some resources and many of them could not be accessed off campus.

The Computing Service and the Sussex Direct team have worked with the Library to make easier access to the Electronic Library a reality. As a result, now all you need is your University network username and password to access almost all the resources available - regardless of where you are.

From the Library home page at www.sussex.ac.uk/library, choose Electronic Library. Then log in using your Computing Service (USCS) user name and password. You need to log in because most of the resources in the Electronic Library are not available to the general public.

In a few cases you will also need a so-called 'Athens' user name and password. (Athens is a system that manages access to electronic resources.) Where this is the case, the Electronic Library pages will make it clear and explain how you can get an Athens user name and password.

If you already have an Athens user name and password, this will continue to work until its expiry date.

You can also access the Electronic Library from the Library page in Sussex Direct (direct.sussex.ac.uk).

Access almost all the resources available - regardless of where you are.

For more information about the new access arrangements, visit www.sussex.ac.uk/library/gen_info/electronic.shtml or contact Ben Wynne, Library e-Strategy Leader (ext. 3117, email b.b.l.wynne@sussex.ac.uk).

Changing the way we work: Pay negotiations 2003-05

You may have been wondering if you'll be getting a cost-of-living increase in this month's pay packet.

As the Bulletin goes to press, the employers and seven trade unions have a provisional agreement on pay rates for 2003-05, including modernisation of pay structures. The unions are in the process of consulting their members about the pay award and modernisation arrangements (such as a single pay spine, simplification of grading structures, and harmonisation of some terms and conditions).

The overall effect would be that pay for most staff would increase over two years by an average of some 7.7 per cent, with pay for the very lowest paid increasing by 12.7 per cent, tied to the pay modernisation agenda.

As acceptance has not yet been reached at a national level, it is unlikely that you will see this increase in October's pay packet. Watch this space for more information as the situation becomes clearer.

Staff vacancies

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<th>Apply by 8 Oct</th>
<th>Apply by 9 Oct</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SPRU (ref 330)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Library and Information Asst, SPRU (ref 331)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Senior Porter (evenings), Catering Services (ref 059b)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Finance and Administration Asst, SPRU (ref 328)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Senior Catering Asst, Catering Services (05bb)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Fellow, Genome Centre (ref 056b)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Research Fellow in Biochemistry, LifeSci (ref 065bb)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Research Fellow, Genome Centre (ref 062b)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Contact Staffing Services on ext. 8706, fax 87401, email <a href="mailto:recruitment@sussex.ac.uk">recruitment@sussex.ac.uk</a></strong></td>
<td><strong>Further details, see <a href="http://www.sussex.ac.uk/units/staffing/personnel/vacas">www.sussex.ac.uk/units/staffing/personnel/vacas</a></strong></td>
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Still chances for staff to study part-time this autumn

There are still spaces available on the following Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) courses: art history, arts & cultural management, film studies, literature, landscape studies, archaeology, local history, geology, field biology, internet studies, women’s studies, environment society & politics, life history work.

CCE’s part-time certificates and degrees are usually taught in the evenings and at weekends. No previous academic qualifications are needed. Single courses can be taken as stand-alone modules. A staff fee-waiver scheme operates – contact CCE for more details.

There is still just time to apply: for information on courses starting this term, call ext. 7888 for a brochure, or visit CCE’s website at www.sussex.ac.uk/cce.
And finally ...

The end of the academic year is inevitably marked by the retirement of several members of staff, and this year is no exception. Some have been at Sussex for longer than they care to remember and a few have spent almost their entire working lives here.

Dr Terry Diffey, for example, was possibly the longest-serving academic still on the payroll until his retirement this week, having joined the faculty as an assistant philosophy lecturer no less than 40 years ago.

David Hitchin also started at Sussex in 1963, as the University’s first programmer. As well as working for the Computing Service, David has been a leading member of the Association of University Teachers (AUT) for many years and was most recently Vice-President of the Sussex branch. Another AUT stalwart is Dr Janet Collett, Lecturer in Genetics, who joined the University a mere 38 years ago. She is joined on the roll-call of long-serving academics by Dr Sandra Freeman, Revd John Lowerson, Dr Chris Mulvey, Dr Kenneth Wheeler and Beryl Williams, who all said their farewells this week.

On the admin side, it was goodbye to Robin Street, who started out on campus at the Gardner Arts Centre but over the last decade has been the motivating force behind alumni and development activity. “When his retirement was agreed, I was keen to make sure we captured as much of Robin’s knowledge and understanding as we could,” said Rob Read, Director of Communications. “At the last count, his handover notes cover 150 pages.”

Margaret Ralph had her retirement party this summer, after 29 years working in the Education subject area. She worked in various secretarial and support posts, and most recently was admissions co-ordinator for international MA and research students. Margaret said, “I have been through lots of changes at Sussex but, after 29 years, I can’t cope with the next lot of re-structuring!”

Morag Stalker also spent many years working in Education. She first came to Sussex from Scotland as an undergraduate in the early 1970s and loved it so much that she stayed on for 30 years as an administrator, in Estates as well as Education. And another Scot, Elizabeth Stewart, will be saying her goodbyes at the end of this month after heading up the Undergraduate Office in Sussex House for many years.

There was an emotional farewell in Sussex House from Jean Hodges, who has served behind the tea bar there for the last dozen years. She had previously spent 12 years in the campus newsagent and then two years working for Catering in Arts D.

On behalf of the University, the Bulletin would like to wish a very happy retirement to all of these staff and to the others who are now taking a well-earned rest after many years of service on campus. Apologies in advance to any who have inadvertently been omitted.

- To mark David Hitchin’s retirement there will be a special organ recital in the Meeting House on Friday 24 October at 1 pm, followed by a buffet lunch. If you would like to join David for this occasion, email J.R.Hopkins@sussex.ac.uk.

A walk on the wild side

David Harper and David Streeter LifeSci

Welcome back to our readers, and hello to new ones. Every month or so we chat about the natural history of campus. Please ask us questions or tell us about things that you have spotted. We can be contacted by emailing david@sussex.ac.uk.

The University campus covers just less than 100 hectares and so its wildlife is heavily influenced by the parkland, woodland and farmland surrounding it.

We are especially fortunate that the Stammer Local Nature Reserve of 212 hectares lies just beyond our western boundary. For example, Sparrowhawks have winter hunting ranges much larger than campus and so their presence here depends on nearby habitats. They do not defend their hunting ranges and several different Sparrowhawks hunt on campus every day. Similarly the Pheasants that have recently been strutting around near Bramber House depend on local farmland for much of their food.

Being built on mature parkland means that campus is much younger than some of its trees, notably the large Ashes, Beeches and English Elms. There are at least 58 species of trees on campus. Some are non-natives, ranging from the ubiquitous Sycamore to a single Ginkgo – the national tree of China – outside Norwich House.

Many native shrubs attractive to wildlife have been planted; in particular, there are more fruiting shrubs such as Guelder Rose and Whitebeam than in the surrounding countryside, making campus a magnet for berry-eating birds.

Readers may recall that back in June we got mildly excited by the range of ‘weeds’ that had invaded the open ground around the new underpass. Many of these were once common plants of the arable fields surrounding campus but have now become scarce as a result of modern farming practices. Groups that have suffered particularly are the flowers of the late summer stubbles and the autumn germinating weeds. Patches of disturbed ground on campus, such as the area around the soil bank to the east of the Mantell Building, can act as a haven for such species.

At the moment this area is sporting a magnificent crop of Weld – not, it has to be said, a particularly beautiful plant, but one that in the past was important as one of the big three ancient ‘dye’s plants’: Madder, Woad and Weld. It produces a particularly brilliant yellow dye.

Hidden among the forest of Weld, Annual Mercury and Black Nightshade we found the flowers of two of our favourite chalk weeds, the fluelens. These tiny dainty yellow flowers are like miniature antirrhinums, with a dark magenta-coloured upper petal, borne on long fine stalks that arise from the trailing stems. They come in two designs: the Sharp-leafed Fluelens, with a pair of pointed lobes at the base of the leaves, and the Round-leafed. Both species are declining in the surrounding farmland; we are delighted that campus provides them with a refuge.
Small ads

FOR SALE: Yamaha trumpet and case, still under guarantee, hardly used. £200 Tel. Hadjia on 562248.

FOR SALE: Citroen DS 2.0, Pallas, 1974, LHD, semi-automatic. Low mileage, new MoT, taxed, £350. Tel. 479300 or ext. 8744.


TO LET: Furnished double bedroom in shared house with Sussex finalists. Queens Park Rd, £63 per week. Suit laid-back, friendly, male student. Call Melanie on 07793 45381 or Laura on 07715 43620.

FOR SALE: N-reg 1.6 5-dr Ford Escort. Power steering, elec. windows, 2 mths tax and MoT, 98k miles. Contact Matt on 07939 192256 or m.lindner@sussex.ac.uk.

FOR SALE: Nissan 200SX turbo sports coupe, P reg. (97), 64k miles. Leather seats, CD, air con., e/w, £5,500 ono. Contact tj.hiltson@sussex.ac.uk.

WANTED: Accommodation with faculty staff member for female ex-mature student (plus 2 h/trained cats), in exchange for help in the house. Cleaner at University. Call Liz c/o Zaki on ext. 3324 or email sussexeducation@sussex.ac.uk.

WANTED: 1993 Nissan Sunny 1.8L automatic, 10 mths MoT, FSH, E/W/M, sun roof, central locking, £995. Tel. 07810 766880.

WANTED: PlayStation 1, E50ono inc 10 games, 2 memory cards, 2 controllers. Boxed & in excellent condition. Contact Mi on ext. 8618.


WANTED: Sony 21" TV w/remote and stands, £150ono; Ferguson 14" TV w/remote, £20ono; full tower computer case, £30; Tefal cordless kettle, £10; HP Scanjet 6200C Pro USB flatbed scanner, £50. Email b.kleung@sussex.ac.uk.

Common Rooms catering update

On 1 August, Catering Services took over responsibility for some of the Common Rooms as part of the University's School reorganisation. The long-term aim is to create modern and attractive common room cafes offering value-for-money services close to the University community at work.

A review of these services has already begun. A first step, as customers may have noted, has been to reconcile prices across the units where there were large and unjustified price differentials. The review also identified many product lines being sold for less than cost of purchase.

Consequently, while some prices have been held and others reduced, in the case of some product lines they have been increased to reflect the true cost and earn sustainable margins.

The vast majority of prices remain below 'market' or 'High Street' levels but are set to cover operating costs, including health and safety regulations and maintenance agreements, and provide for future improvements.

The services will be monitored and reviewed throughout the year to test customer reactions. Immediate plans include equipment upgrades, product quality reviews and a key unit switching to Fair Trade 'filter' and 'bean-to-cup' coffee.