Sunshine on a brainy day

The sun shone down on more than 2,200 students graduating at the Brighton Dome this month. Some of them had extraordinary tales to tell.

Reaching for the stars
Dan Dicken gave up the opportunity to study music because he became star struck and has now set his sights on becoming an astronaut rather than a rock star.

Without a science background he found the maths element of the BSc in Astrophysics challenging, despite taking a foundation year. But he excelled at the written work and won the physics department's Pamela Rothwell prize for his 24,000-word project.

The next stage in his quest to become an astronaut will be to continue his studies to doctoral level. "It may sound a romantic ambition – particularly since you can send robots rather than people into space these days. But I think science needs people like me to keep others inspired."

The three degrees
Retired teacher Katherine Storr collected the latest of her three degrees from Sussex, a DPhil in History. She already has a BA in Cultural Studies and an MA in Contemporary History.

Katherine's educational journey began in January 1984, when she embarked on a Women's Studies certificate at the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE). "I had no idea what women's studies were," she recalled. "For my generation, anything to do with women involved perks, getting your nails done, bosoms and babies. But my studies introduced me to the idea that there is actually a fascinating and important women's history."

Her doctoral research was inspired by family stories of World War I and concentrated on the lesser-known roles played by civilian women during and after the conflict.

Baby boom
Savina Ammassari was so keen to finish her doctoral thesis before the birth of her second daughter that she took her computer to hospital and worked on it immediately before and after the delivery.

She wouldn't recommend this behaviour. "Looking back, it was a little crazy. I did finish my thesis – but not until several months later."

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Sussex scientists aim to make experiments more accurate.

3 Surreal
The life of a remarkable, yet almost forgotten, woman.

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True thoughts revealed as gay and lesbian diaries are opened.

3 Wild side
Exposed: the bugs boring away by the cash machine.

3 Dear diary
The Vice-Chancellor responds to new twist in the stadium saga.

Sussex celebrates 40 years of teacher training

The head of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) has praised Sussex for its ground-breaking work in getting trainees off campus and into the classroom to learn their skills.

"You're the pioneers of school-based training, which is now the model across the country," said Mr Ralph Tabberer at a conference to celebrate 40 years of teacher training at Sussex. "You've set up ways of working which will be absolutely right for the future."

During the conference, Mr Tabberer also highlighted the unusual combination at Sussex of teacher training and academic research in the education field. "I have great respect for this university," he said. "It's got a great reputation. I know it because of the work it's done in initial teacher education but also the research side.

The TTA, which recruits graduates to the teaching profession, is only ten years old - "a mere child" in comparison to the Sussex Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), as Mr Tabberer observed.

The government has recently given the TTA the job of assessing training needs of support staff in schools and a bigger role in continuing professional development for teachers. Sussex is already involved in both of these areas, offering training programmes for teaching assistants as well as postgraduate taught degrees to meet the needs of mid-career professionals in teaching and management.

Dr Vi Griffiths, director of Initial Teacher Education, cuts the celebratory cake.
Scientist redefines research on hormone disrupters

 Jacqui Bealing
 Senior Press Officer
 Following extensive positive coverage in the Crawley News, the Crawley Observer and the Argus, a comment piece in the Crawley News (21 July) waxed lyrical about the prospects for a new campus that would bring to the town. “If Sussex University does build its campus here, then the town would surely prosper and grow,” it says. “The response to the plans has so far been overwhelmingly positive, with everyone from residents, businesses and students queuing up to toast the good news.”

Marvellous! Meanwhile, our ever-enthusiastic academics have been doing their bit to raise the University’s profile.

Lizzie Thynne’s film project about lesbian cross-dresser Claudie Calhoun made a superb picture spread in the Argus (17 July), with BBC Radio 4’s ‘Front Row’ and ‘Woman’s Hour’ also showing interest.

Also in the Argus, Dr Robert Smith was quoted on what the Cassini space probe is revealing about Saturn’s rings, while in the May edition of Cosmopolitan Dr Dolores Mary Tierney was quoted on that other great universal mystery: what a man’s favourite film says about him.

Dr Michael Bull’s knowledge of the iPod and personal music systems is still in constant demand, most recently by Newswise (2 August) and the BBC World Service programme ‘The World’ (19 July), broadcast in the USA.

On the telly, Professor Dai Stephens and Professor Dora Duka were interviewed by Meridian Tonight (14 and 20 July) for a series on alcohol addiction and binge drinking, while Professor Alan Turner is due to be on CNN in August talking about the design of golf clubs.

On the radio, Dr Alan Lester’s knowledge of Cape Town’s past as a slave-based society was called upon for the BBC Radio 4 programme ‘Meet the Descendants’ (14 July); Dorothy Sheridan spoke on BBC Southern Counties Radio about the completion of the National Gay and Lesbian Survey (21 July); and Dr Tim Bale was drafted in to comment on the Butler Report (14 July).

All articles are also featured on the internet at www.sussex.ac.uk/press_office/bulletin

Sussex Startracker granted patent

A patent has been granted for a new device developed by Sussex scientists that uses optical technology to help satellites and space craft track their position and altitude faster and more reliably.

The complex device, known as a Startracker, has been developed at Sussex by Professor Chris Chatwin, Dr Rupert Young and Anastodimos Kouris in the Photonic Systems Research Laboratory.

“Because the new equipment is smaller and lighter than other devices, it fits well with the new generation of micro-satellites,” explains Chris. “It also uses less of the available computing power, which enables the satellite to function more efficiently and undertake extra tasks. The optical components also have a greater tolerance to radiation.”

Sussex IP, which manages and commercialises the University’s intellectual property portfolio, arranged and funded UK and international patent applications to ensure the concept is properly protected.

Sussex through to stage two

Professor Peter Childs was in London this month for guidance on taking forward a Sussex bid to establish a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL).

Sussex submitted three bids to HEFCE’s CETL initiative, which aims to reward excellent teaching practice, and to invest in it to increase its impact across a wider teaching and learning community. The first stage of the bidding process focused on the case for learning and teaching excellence and the rationale for each centre’s focus. From the 255 submissions, HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England) has selected 106 to proceed to the next stage.

One of these is the Sussex bid – joint with the University of Brighton – for a CETL in Creativity. It will now be assessed on the business case for developing creativity as an area of excellence and increasing its impact on teaching and learning.

Both universities have a track record in the related areas of design, innovation and creativity. The centrepiece of the CETL in Creativity would be a number of ‘creation zones’ with ‘creation pods’ and observation galleries, enabling individuals to come together to generate and communicate their ideas and to be observed during the process by their peers. Peter describes this as an “environment where students learn by doing, rather than just listening”.

The deadline for stage two bids is the end of October. HEFCE expects to fund more than 70 CETLs and will announce the successful proposals in January 2005. Some £315 million is available over the five-year period from 2004–05 to 2008–09, including £140 million for capital in the first two years.
Top choreographer joins film tribute to surrealist heroine

Leading British dance choreographer Lea Anderson joined media and cultural studies lecturer Lizzie Thynne in Sussex this month to make a film about one of the unsung heroines of 20th-century photography.

Lizzie is filming the amazing story of French surrealist photographer Lucy Schwob, aka Claude Cahun (1894–1954). "This is an ambitious and experimental piece," she says, "but there is a narrative element to it too because Cahun's life was so extraordinary."

The film, called Playing A Part, will include movement sequences featuring dancers from Lea Anderson's company, The Cholmondeleys, and based on some of Cahun's photographs.

Depicted in one self-portrait as a cross-dressing female dandy with a shaved head and androgynous clothes, Cahun challenged accepted views of gender and sexuality and focused on representations of her own identity.

She fell in love with her half-sister, Suzanne Malherbe, and together they moved to Jersey, where they aided the Resistance when the island was under German occupation. The film will include the couple's own words and images, including extracts from their love letters, as well as interviews with people who were imprisoned with them by the Nazis.

Only 300 of Cahun's images survived the war and but for the interest of a few dealers her work and life would have been lost to posterity, Lizzie says the aim of the film is to "record an almost forgotten woman artist's achievements, her lifelong partnership and her remarkable bravery and independence".

The film, funded by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB), will be shown at major film festivals including Berlin, London and Paris, at exhibitions and in galleries.

Gay diaries reveal an alternative past

Out now

The truth is out. A national gay and lesbian survey, conducted over the past 20 years and involving around 200 diarists, has been donated in full to the University.

In the mid 1980s actor and writer Ken Barrow began a project that would reflect the thoughts and feelings of gay and lesbian people during what came to be a period of huge social change. He invited contributors to send him their life stories in the form of responses to various themes, such as growing up, coming out, health issues, and political and social events.

Copies were transferred to the Library's Mass-Observation Archive, which gathers writings based on everyday lives and written by ordinary people. Down the years they have been made available (in an anonymous form) for researchers to use.

When Ken died in 1993, the work was continued by two volunteers. They recently decided to wind up the project and delivered the final instalment to the University. Library staff will now catalogue the responses into an archive that forms a unique snapshot of life in the gay community over the past 20 years.

The Library's Dorothy Sheridan says: "This is a unique collection and we are pleased to have it at Sussex. It shows how the Mass-Observation idea of gathering personal writing can be taken up by those who might otherwise not be represented in their own words. The anonymity of the project allowed for a huge degree of candour, making it all the more valuable."

The late summer flowers are now beginning to come into their own. The blue-mauve heads of Field Scabious are brightening open spots in the shrubbery around the East Slope car parks.

‘Scabious’ indicates the former use of this attractive plant as a cure of all manner of scabs. Nicholas Culpepper confidently asserts that, "The decoction of the Roots taken for forty daies together, or a dram of the Powder of them taken at a time in Whey doth wonderfully help those that are troubled with running or spreading scabs, Tatters, Ring worms, yes, though they proceed from the French pox!"

A particularly conspicuous feature of hedgerows and wood margins from spring onwards are the white flower heads of members of the umbellifer family. A number of species flower sequentially throughout the summer, the most abundant at this time of year being Hogweed.

There is plenty around campus at the moment and as its name suggests it was indeed collected for pig food. It is also distinguished as having a prodigious number of local country names. Geoffrey Grigson lists about 70, among which ‘Humpy-Scrumples’ is claimed for Sussex, although we have to confess to never having met it ourselves.

The flowers have a rather unpleasant smell designed to deceive pollinating insects into the exciting possibilities of a pile of carrion or dung. The chemical attractants are mostly monooximes such as methylamine, which have a rather fishy smell.

Hogweed flowers are marvellous spots for watching insects, from flies to bees. An orange soldier beetle, Rhagonycha fulva, is particularly conspicuous on the white flowers. This species — distinguished from relatives by its black ‘boots’ (feet) and ‘knapsack’ (tips of wing cases) — can predict rain, retreating beneath leaves well before the first drops fall. The nickname of Hogweed Bonking Beetle indelicately indicates a common activity. The wivd 'uniform' seems to warn birds away from its distasteful body, hence the brazen behaviour.

But some denizens of Hogweed are distinctly 'shy'. The scattered Hogweeds in the car parks east of the HSBC bank are home to Pansy Weevorms. These caterpillars — which eat several members of the carrot family — are pale grey above and yellow below, with a black head and markings.

They build a web of silk, constricting a flower head. Smaller larvae share a web, even with complete strangers. Once larger (they can reach 2cm long), each moves to its own web, defending it by viciously head-butting any intruder. The webs probably defend them from both ultraviolet radiation and predators, although we saw Blue Tits extract some larvae.

From late July, larvae descend and bore holes into the main stem of the plant to pupate. The adults, which are tiny brownish moths, emerge a few weeks later but rarely fly until the following May when they mate: coyly, under the cover of darkness.

Bonking Beetle are conspicuous on the white flowers of the Hogweed.
Obituary

David Huddie

David Huddie, who graduated in 2002, died on 4 July at the age of 23.

"David was an outstanding student," says Dr David Young. "He well deserved his first in Artificial Intelligence with Management Studies, graduating alongside his sister Joanne.

"He was notably determined, focused and effective. These qualities were demonstrated not only academically, for instance in his final year project on image understanding, but also in his passions for snowboarding and surfing."

David worked for six months from July-December 2002 as a housing assistant on campus. He found he had cancer a few months after graduating. "His emails describing the high and low points of his illness are documents of remarkable honesty and courage," says David Young.

Library strategic plan 2004-2007

Longer evening and weekend opening hours with better services, an increase in self-service borrowing facilities, and more electronic-only information; this is what the Library hopes to deliver over the next three years.

The goals are set out in the Library's new strategic plan, available online at www.sussex.ac.uk/library/news/strategicplan.shtml.

The planning process, from October 2003 to May this year, included a number of focus groups with users of the Library, a survey of student and staff opinion of Library services and visits to other libraries.

The plan was endorsed at recent meetings of the Library Consultative Group and the Senior Management Group.

Stadium inquiry to be re-opened

The public inquiry into proposals for a new stadium for Brighton and Hove Albion Football Club will be re-opened "as soon as possible", Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott announced this week.

The club was seeking planning permission for a 23,000-seater stadium at Falmer, on the other side of the A27 from the Sussex campus.

But instead of making a decision either way, the government has opted to re-open the public inquiry (held from February to October 2003), with seven other sites in Brighton and Hove to be considered against set criteria.

Responding to the announcement, the Vice-Chancellor said: "We have sympathy both with the football club and the residents of Falmer that after all this time there is still no firm decision."

Small ads

For sale: Irena Dalslev double bedframe and mattress, together or separate. £125. Irena Birtt pine wardrobe, H175 W86 D50 £40. Email d.fewkes@sussex.ac.uk or call ext. 7411.

For sale: Peugeot 306, 1.9 Turbo diesel, reg. M30 HXU, 130000 miles, MoT Feb. £1,250ono. Email j.c.fallon@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Room in shared house. Oct-mid Jan. £250pcm. Suit visiting student or employed person. Email alinep@sussex.ac.uk, ext. 2945.

To let: 2-bed Hanover house with garage. Suit staff or PG. Available Sep. £850pcm. Call 07909

News in brief

Language open courses for 2004/05

Part-time language courses are now enrolling, open to everyone and to suit all levels. Weekly lunchtime or evening classes are available in Arabic, Classical Greek, Czech, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Mandarin, Polish, Russian and Spanish. For more information and an enrolment form, see www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/opencourses. Alternatively, contact the Open Course Co-ordinator in Arts A48, ext. 2575.

University-approved hotels

A list of University-approved hotels and guest houses in the Brighton and Hove area is now available online. All of the listed establishments have been visited and approved by the approved hotels working panel and will be reviewed annually. In most cases the panel has negotiated special rates.

New doctoral programme

A new doctoral programme was launched at Sussex this month. Based on a highly successful part-time doctorate for UK-based professionals, the International Professional Doctorate (EdD) is a distance-learning programme supported by a web-based teaching and learning package and a three-week summer school held annually at Sussex.

Its first cohort consists of 10 participants from eight countries and includes professionals working with UNESCO, the United Nations, British Council (Kosovo), the Japanese aid agency JICA and a Belgian NGO, as well as senior administrators and lecturers/teachers from educational institutions overseas.

The programme is convened by Dr Fiona Leach and Dr Krwame Akwempong from the School of Education.

24-hour museum

Two tutors from the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE), Jack Latimer and Geoffrey Mead, were part of the core team involved in setting up a new "24-hour museum" at Brighton Local History Centre in Brighton Museum. It takes the form of a virtual walk through the city and can be downloaded and followed on foot.

Road closure 1 August

North–South Road will be closed on Sunday (1 August) from 8am–4pm.

All articles are also featured on the internet at www.sussex.ac.uk/press_offices/bulletin

The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Brenda Niks, with contributions from Jacqui Bealling and Maggie Glune. We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from the staff and students of the University. The Bulletin will be back in September, after a summer break. The next issue will be out on 10 September, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 3 September. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 8888 or email bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.