Sussex chemists refine dragon's blood

Two members of the Chemistry department recently received an unusual request from one of the University's partner institutions: a student from West Dean College near Chichester wanted help in refining dragon's blood!

Ian McWilliams, a West Dean student on their programme in Early Stringed Musical Instruments, is trying to reproduce as accurately as possible the beautiful colours of string instruments made by the great Italian masters.

No aspect of violin making has generated more confusion, controversy and conjecture than the subject of varnish, but it is known that one of the materials used for producing the colour is 'dragon's blood', a deep red/orange resin that exudes from some species of palm tree. Dragon's blood was once thought to be the result of a battle between a dragon and an elephant and is now used as a colouring agent in some herbal remedies and in voodoo ceremonies.

According to Ian, modern attempts to colour varnishes using dragon's blood have been disappointing because the varnish gradually turns muddy and loses its depth. Ian had found a 1903 German recipe for refining dragon's blood and approached Professor Norman Billingham for help in reproducing the process, which involves lots of extractions with different solvents to remove impurities. Norman and his colleague Dr Hans-Georg Streicher agreed to try to reproduce the method using modern equipment.

The first attempt, using dragon's blood from an artist's supplier, was a disaster, giving almost no useful product. Some online research showed that dragon's blood is also available from health-food stores in the USA and a sample was obtained that way. This worked beautifully and Hans and Norman were able to produce enough refined dragon's blood to allow Ian to colour many instruments.

The first, a cello, was displayed at the West Dean graduation ceremony in July. (The University of Sussex validates various postgraduate programmes at West Dean, including Early Stringed Musical Instruments.)

It may be a long time before Norman and Hans-Georg know if the project was a success. "The best string instruments need decades to mature," explains Norman. "But the new instrument certainly looks magnificent and the project was a good example of how science and craft can collaborate."

National survey reveals students’ views of university

The results of the first ever National Student Survey were published this week (Thursday 22 September), reporting final-year students’ views on teaching, assessment, academic support, organisation, learning resources and personal development.

Nationally, the survey shows that students think they get good teaching and support from the vast majority of universities. The scores across the country are clustered quite tightly together, with good results for almost every institution and differences just a matter of two or three tenths of a point.

Sussex comes out generally well from the survey. The finalists surveyed who began their studies in 2001 and 2002 were in general satisfied with the quality of their courses, with the teaching and support provided, with the resources they have available and how the courses are run.

However, while Sussex's scores for teaching, assessment and organisation stood up well to national comparisons, students at some other universities rated their institutions more highly in areas such as personal development and academic support, suggesting that at Sussex there is room for improvement.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alsaidr Smith, said: "It's pleasing to see our teaching scores stand up well to comparison with Russell Group and other 1994 Group universities. Naturally we are disappointed that in some areas we did not score more highly. We have made a range of improvements already in recent years which should reflect in future surveys. But there are areas where we can do better."

Led by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Mary Stuart, the University collectively will be working with the Students' Union to understand what the results mean for Sussex, alongside the student evaluation and other student feedback which Sussex undertakes. This will identify what the underlying issues might be and how the University can continue to make improvements.

Mary said: "One of the characteristics we look for in Sussex students is a critical and questioning approach. We welcome feedback and comment to ensure we continue to improve what we provide to our students."

The survey results are not presented in any ranking order, although the media are likely to use the annual data for their own league tables. However, with students at Oxford, Cambridge and Warwick having boycotted the survey this year, it is not yet clear how the results will be used by the press.
BOOKMARK

John Gribbin (Visiting Research Fellow in Astronomy, SciTech)
The Fellowship: The story of a revolution Allen Lane, £20.00 (hardback)
ISBN: 0713997451
The publisher says: "John Gribbin describes the
growth of the Royal Society, which grew out of
meetings held in Oxford during the Civil War, and
laterly in London, among natural philosophers,
especially through the efforts of three men: William
Gilbert, Francis Bacon and William Harvey. The
extraordinary return in 1759 of a comet that, on
the basis of Newton's theory of gravity, had been
predicted by Edmond Halley, marked the triumph of this scientific revolution."

Andrea Prencipe (Senior Fellow, SPRU, Mike Hobday (Professor of Innovation Management, SPRU) and Andrew Davies (eds)
The Business of Systems Integration Oxford University Press, £24.99 (paperback)
ISBN: 019926323X
The publisher says: "This book is the first to
systematically explore systems integration from a
business and innovation perspective. Contributors
develop deeply into the nature, dimensions and
dynamics of the new systems integration."

Martin Shaw (Professor of International Relations and Politics, SocCul)
The New Western Way of War Polity Press, £13.99 (paperback)
ISBN: 0745634117
The publisher says: "Martin Shaw argues that the
new Western way of war is in crisis. He argues that
the US has consistently routed the key rules that
enabled Western states to fight these earlier wars
successfully. The results are not only political failure
and a disaster in Iraq, but also a loss of credibility for
the very idea of Western warfare. Ultimately,
attentives to manage, govern and rule over the risks
of war produce greater risks for those in power."

Joe Tidd (Professor, SPRU), John Bessant (Honorary Professor, SPRU) and Keith Pavitt
Managing Innovation: Integrating technological, market and organizational change (3rd ed.)
John Wiley, £31.99 (paperback)
ISBN: 0470093269

Max Wheeler (Reader in Linguistics, Hums)
The Phonology of Catalan Wiley, £65.00 (Hardback)
ISBN: 0199258614
The publisher says: "This is the most comprehensive
account of Catalan phonology ever published.
Catalan is the first language of six-and-a-half million
people in northeastern Spain and of the peoples of
Andorra, French Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, and
a small region of Sardinia. Dr Wheeler describes
Barcelona pronunciation and the major varieties of
western Catalan, Valencia, and Majorca, and
considers social and stylistic variation."

Academic receives top teaching honour

Duncan Mackrill, Music Curriculum Tutor for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), has received an
award worth £50,000 for his excellence in teaching.

Duncan was among 50 staff from universities and colleges who were
awarded National Teaching Fellowships by Higher Education Minister Bill Rammell at a
gala dinner in London this month.

Duncan and the other new Fellows each received £50,000, to be used for projects
that will make a significant contribution to learning and teaching. Duncan will use
his award to investigate whether using video with trainee music teachers assists
them in improving and developing their teaching.

Duncan is passionate about the use of music technology in education and
assessment in music, and has developed the range and use of equipment for PGCE
trainees. Students can now compose and

replay their work immediately using scoring
or sequencing software, edit it and refine
their work over time.

CETL Creativity Development Fund Awards

The first tangible benefits of the new Centre for Excellence in Teaching &
Learning (CETL) in Creativity will be
making themselves felt shortly, when
funds are released for a number of
new projects.

The Creativity Development Fund provides funding for the development and
enhancement of innovative learning and
teaching, and for research into the nature
of the creative process in existing courses
and activities.

The awarding panel for this new £60,000
fund met for the first time on 15
September to consider a broad range of
bids from staff at Sussex and Brighton, as
well as the Medical School (BSMS).

The following staff all submitted
successful proposals:

- Professor Richard Stobart (Sussex, Engineering & Design): Quantifying the
teaching and learning value of Fab Labs
- Juliette Buss and Professor Helen
Smith (BSMS): Creative medical school
- Sally Amis (Brighton, Fashion & Textiles): Fashion pattern-cutting using CADCAM
to enhance creativity
- Avril Loveless (Brighton, Education): Creativity, e-learning and teacher
education

Further details of all these bids will be
available shortly on the CETL website at
www.sussex.ac.uk/creativity, where the
closing date for the next round of bids will
also be found.

The CETL in Creativity is a joint initiative
between Sussex and Brighton, building on
the two universities' track record of
collaborating in the areas of design,
innovation and creativity. It will explore
how a technology-rich environment can
support the creative process, in both
science and arts subjects.

Bookmark is a regular review of new books by Sussex authors.
You can buy these books at the University Bookshop in Bramber House,
or order them at www.sussexuniversitybooks.co.uk. Staff get a 10% discount on
all products in the Bookshop on production of valid ID.
You couldn't make it up. Could you?

What's the difference between 'colour' and 'color'? What about 'favour' and 'favor'? To you and me it might only be a u. But this lack of a letter could also be the giveaway clue that a student's surprisingly well-written essay may be plagiarised.

Plagiarism – basically a student passing off someone else's work intentionally or unintentionally as their own – is becoming something of a national cause for concern. As most essays available online are sourced from the United States, a sudden change in spelling, from British to American English, on a student's work might be a sign a sizable chunk of it was copied from the web. This, and many other tips, can be found on a new plagiarism website set up by a University working group looking into the subject.

"Departments have been telling us that plagiarism is becoming more of an issue," says Assistant Registrar Tracey Beck, who has been working on the new site. "We thought it would be helpful to have one place where students could find resources about plagiarism, as well as giving academics information on how to identify problems with students' work before those problems get out of hand."

Contrary to popular belief, though, students who get caught plagiarising haven't all been single-mindedly setting out to fool their tutors. "Many students are plagiarising simply because they have poor study skills, they don't know how to reference properly, or come from countries with different academic cultures where it is more acceptable to quote vast swatches of text from elsewhere," says Tracey. "In the UK, however, this would be plagiarism if unattributed to the writer so students do need some guidance."

Students can see examples of what counts as plagiarism, take online tutorials to see if they would spot it, look at effective study skills and see what penalties are in place if they are caught. Staff, meanwhile, can read up on the regulations surrounding plagiarism, learn how to spot plagiarised works and how to approach a student you suspected of copying. "The point," says Tracey, "is to discourage students from plagiarising in the first place, and equip tutors with the tools they need to spot it early on, so an instance of copying doesn't escalate further."

The plagiarism website can be found at: www.sussex.ac.uk/academicoffices/plagiarism.

Students doing it for themselves

With the start of the academic year, a new round of elections of student representatives is about to begin.

The role of student reps is very important in providing a link between students and staff, and in ensuring that the student voice is heard when the University makes policy decisions.

Publicity about the elections is crucial, and this is where teaching staff can help. Please let your students know that the elections are taking place and encourage them to get involved either by becoming a student rep and/or by voting.

The Students' Union and University have worked together to develop an efficient and effective election process. To this end, elections for all student reps will take place over the same time period, posters will be put up around campus, leaflets distributed to students, and information put up on the Students' Union website (www.usu.info/studentreps).

Students can nominate themselves to be a student rep on the Students' Union website from Monday (26 September) until Friday 14 October.

Once the nominations have been received, all students can go to the website to vote for a student rep for their department or subject area.

Voting opens on Monday 17 October and closes on Friday 21 October. The results of the elections will be published on the website shortly afterwards.

If you have any comment on the election process, send them to Tracey Beck (t.a.beck@sussex.ac.uk) or Sophie McGlinn (education@usu.sussex.ac.uk).
**Academic events**

**SAT 24 SEP**
9am-5pm
Symposium: Responsibility and the family. For more information, contact Heather Keating on ext. 8706 or E.h.keating@sussex.ac.uk, or Jo Bridgman on ext. 8133 or E.j.c.bridgman@sussex.ac.uk, Conference Centre.

**WED 5 OCT**
1pm-2pm Seminar: Dan Wajley (Clare Hall), Commonality and diversity in helicase enzyme mechanisms. Genome Centre Seminar Room.
1pm-2.30pm IDS seminar: Esther Akwah (journalist, broadcaster, writer, documentary maker). Can I be me? Africa is a woman. IDS 221.
5pm Marie Jahoda Memorial Lecture: Gordon Conway (Chief Scientific Adviser, Department for International Development). Science, technology and development: Opportunities and limits. BSMS lecture theatre. RSVP essential: ext. 2910 or E.s+j.birchmore@sussex.ac.uk.

**Small ads**
For sale: Child’s bike seat (Hampa). Approved up to 22kg, adjustable foot rests. £15 ono, E.gee@b@.sussex.ac.uk, ext. 7866.
For sale: Hotpoint Aquarius washing machine. Ultima 1000 speed. Available 1 Nov. Ext. 2302 or 6641 or E.deo231@.sussex.ac.uk.
For sale: 3-door Citroen Saxo. 2001, manual, £4,000 ono. Tmr T. Rowe on 388178 or after 7pm or Branner House porter on ext. 3883.
To let: Furnished double room in flat, Central B’ton (Clifton). Suit PG or professional female. £55 p/w. T.07956 597800, E.rk93@sussex.ac.uk.
Proofreading: By native English-speaking Sussex graduate. DPhil thesis, Masters’ dissertations, journal articles; all subjects welcome. £120p (neg.). E.f.taylor@sussex.ac.uk.
To let: GF studio flat in Lewes from mid-Sep. En-suite bath/shower. Easy £390 pcm incl. T.477319. E.abigailcmw@eurobell.co.uk.
To let: UF 3/4-bed detached house in Kingston. Available mid Nov. £1,050 pcm. Couples or families only (not groups) T Kim Nixon on 483993 or John Nixon on ext. 8536, E.knmrsen@hotmail.co.uk or j.nixon@sussex.ac.uk.
For sale: VW Golf 1.4, hatchback. m. reg. (1994). New MoT. Tax Apr. £689. E.1baul14@sussex.ac.uk.

**First Class**

**Memorial event for Sergei Hackel**
A memorial event for the Rev Dr Sergei Hackel, who died on 9 February, will take place in the Meeting House on Thursday (29 September). It starts in the chapel at 2.30pm, before a jazz and wine reception in the Quiet Room. Confirm attendance with Beryl Williams on sff11@sussex.ac.uk or Stella Rock on stellaroark@yahoo.co.uk.

**Worth waiting for**
The IDS restaurant and bar are closed for refurbishment until 3 October.

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**News in brief**

**Firework display to go with a bang**
The annual firework display to usher in the new academic year will be held on Friday 7 October. The Students’ Union will be laying on a barbecue outside Falmer Bar during the evening, with the big bangs beginning at 7.30pm. All the action takes place adjacent to the Gardner Arts Centre and friends and family are welcome to join in this enjoyable and traditional campus event.

**Enrol now for an Open Language Course**
Enrolments are now open for language courses commencing in October with the Sussex Language Institute. Courses are offered in a wide range of languages including Arabic, Chinese, Czech, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Polish, Russian and Spanish. Staff and full-time students qualify for a reduced rate. For more information, see www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/openCourses or call ext. 2575.

**Deaths of honorary graduates**
Dr Erasmus Barlow, a former trustee of the Barlow Collection of Chinese Ceramics, Bronzes and Jades, has died. The 400-piece collection was formed by his father Sir Alan Barlow and bequeathed to the University in 1968 for teaching and display purposes. Many of the pieces have been on display since 1974, when the Barlow Gallery opened and the first Barlow Lecture was given. Dr Erasmus Barlow and his brother Sir Thomas Barlow were trustees for over 20 years and in 1997 the University awarded them honorary Doctor of Letters degrees at a special ceremony. Professor Sir Hermann Bondi, a mathematician and cosmologist who received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Sussex in 1973, died on 10 September.

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**First Class**

**Andy Collington**, Web Programmer in the Web Team, has passed an extremely difficult exam to become a Zend Certified Engineer. This is a highly sought-after, well-recognised certification in programming the software language PHP.

Student journalist **Matt Greene**, who writes film and music reviews for the barges, has been shortlisted for ‘Critic of the year’ in the Guardian’s Student Media Awards. The judges are looking for “entertaining, stylish, authoritative criticism that avoids clichés and offers a fresh, illuminating view of a performance/film/television programme etc.” Matt will find out on 2 November if he’s a winner.

**The British Sociological Association has awarded Dr Adam Hedgecoe its Sociology of Health and Illness Book Prize for The Politics of Personalised Medicine: Pharmacogenetics in the clinic, published in 2004.**

**Art historian Professor David Alan Mellor is to receive the J Dudley Johnston Award from the Royal Photographic Society at a ceremony on 6 October.**

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**FILM**

**SAT 1 Oct**
8pm Kings and Queen (Rois et Reine) (15). GAC

**Sun 2 Oct**
2pm Robots (PG). GAC

**5pm Kung Fu Hustle** (15). GAC

**8pm The Consequences of Love** (15). GAC.

**EXHIBITIONS**
Thu 6 Oct–Sun 27 Nov
Euan Duff, New Society & Peter Mitchell: Archives from the new British photography of the 70s

Three key archives from 1970s photography: Euan Duff’s pioneering work in five parts, How We Are (drawn from the Mass-Observation Archive at Sussex); Peter Mitchell’s early colour documentary in Yorkshire, The New Reputation of the Viking IV Space Mission; and the Other Britain, comprising photographs taken for New Society magazine, including work by Martin Parr, Ian Berry and Homer Sykes. GAC.

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