Massive galaxy cluster found ten billion light years away

A Sussex astronomer is the lead researcher for a project that has led to the discovery of the most distant cluster of galaxies observed to date. The cluster, which is 10 billion light years from Earth, is also likely to be the most massive yet found at such an early era in the Universe.

When Dr Kathy Romer set up the study eight years ago, she thought she was taking a huge gamble. "Although we predicted that we would find clusters at such large distances, we had no guarantees that we’d find any."

Kathy, whose team includes Sussex astrophysicist Professor Andrew Liddle and colleagues at other UK and American institutions, used observations from the European X-ray Multi Mirror (XMM) Newton satellite to find this new cluster and then determined its distance using the 10-metre W. M. Keck telescope in Hawaii.

"But it’s not just telescopes that are needed for a project like this," comments Kathy. "We have also taken full advantage of recent advances in computing; from new image-processing algorithms to the falling price of disk storage."

When viewed with an optical telescope, the distant cluster is revealed as a dense gathering of hundreds of galaxies. "The surprise here is that the galaxies in this cluster are built up from old stars; one would expect that such a distant cluster would be full of new stars, since we are viewing it so far back toward the Big Bang," says Kathy. "Clusters like this are vital to our understanding of how galaxies formed in the first place."

The cluster, named XMM-2215-1734, is surprisingly massive; it weighs approximately 500 trillion times the mass of our sun. Most of the mass is "dark matter", a mysterious form of matter that dominates the mass of all galaxies and clusters in the Universe but cannot be seen by telescopes.

Kathy and her team are continuing the search for more clusters like XMM-2215-1734 in the XMM-Newton data archive. They already have more than 1,000 other candidate galaxy clusters that require confirmation using ground-based optical telescopes. Ultimately they will use their collection of clusters to better understand the physics of the Big Bang.

While the search for more clusters continues, the team will be studying XMM-2215-1734 in more detail, with all the tools available. Already images have been taken by the Hubble Space Telescope of this exciting object. The galaxy cluster is a fossil of the early Universe and therefore will be treasured by all astronomers.

The work was funded by NASA, the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (PPARC), the Holbe Bequest and the National Science Foundation.

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National pay dispute resolved

Union calls off exams boycott

The long-running national academic pay dispute looks to have been resolved. In a joint statement issued on Tuesday (6 June), the national employers' organisation (UCEA) and the staff unions nationally set out the pay agreement that the unions will now be recommending for acceptance.

The University and Colleges Union (UCU) - the union formed from the merger of AUT and NATFHE - immediately suspended action and UCU members are expected to work as normal on assessment as on all other areas.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, said: "I am pleased that a resolution of the national pay dispute seems to have been achieved. This has not been an easy period for any of us at the University, and I want to thank staff for their efforts to support students and colleagues."

The three-year pay deal would provide increases in salary for staff of 3.1% and up to 19.5% for lower paid staff. For the coming academic year, 2006-07, salaries would be increased by 3% on 1 August 2006, and again by 1% on 1 February 2007.

Unions nationally still need to make a formal acceptance of the offer through the normal processes that are in place for this, including a ballot of UCU members, and final agreement is expected in the coming weeks. Subject to that being achieved, Sussex would make the first pay increases in August salaries.

In relation to the ending of the assessment boycott, the Vice-Chancellor said: "With goodwill and effort from everyone involved, we should be able to present our students at Sussex with the degrees and end-of-year exam results which their hard work and study properly deserve."

"We are just about in time now to recover, but only just. It will require hard work over coming weeks to normalise the situation for students."

Revised deadlines for submission of marks are being set, with exam boards meeting to schedule as planned later this month. Graduation will go ahead as planned, with the aim to ensure as many students as possible get properly awarded degrees. Detailed advice is being issued to schools and exam-board officers by the Academic Registrar, Owen Richards.

In relation to the costs of the pay settlement, the Vice-Chancellor added: "It will not be an easy settlement to manage financially here, as at all universities in the UK. These additional pay costs are significant over the coming years and will have implications for our future plans."

"It’s too soon to say in detail what it will mean for our ongoing programme of investment and costs savings, but we have to look critically at our future financial plans and be prepared to take some tough decisions."

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Inside

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Academics respond to VC's views on the pay negotiations.

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Research says being good at beer or footie proves masculinity.

4 Radio Times
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5 Erasmus
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6 Alumni hosts
Chance for alumni to learn from and help international students.
Pay is a long-term problem

With regard to the VC’s comment that academic salaries have risen 20% in the past three years (VC’s voice 26 May), it should be noted that these purported rises in salary have been received only where the framework agreement (including the memorandum of understanding reached between UCEA and AUT) has been implemented. Until the framework agreement is implemented at Sussex, such rises have not occurred here.

It should also be noted that the present pay negotiations are not about a simple increase in pay. Rather the University and College Union (formerly AUT and NATFHE) is seeking to address two interrelated concerns:

1) A remedy for the stagnation of academic pay in the past 20 years. In 2004 Tony Blair acknowledged this situation, remarking that “the salaries of academic staff... have shown practically no increase in real terms over two decades”. Bearing this in mind, the VC’s 20% increase over the past three years could be rephrased as a 1% increase per year for the past 20 years. It does not then sound so impressive.

2) Action to remedy the pay of academics vis-à-vis other professionals. UCEA’s pay offer of 30 May – which is phased such that it translates into cash rises of 3.5%, 4% and 2.5% over the next three years – barely keeps pace with inflation and thus cannot begin to address this decline.

As the University embarks on an ‘investment in excellence’ programme, it would be worth asking whether it will be possible to locate such excellence unless the University is willing to pay for it. So long as it remains attractive to leave academia for other professional careers, I would suggest it will not.

Perhaps the VC should admit that this is a long-term strategic problem rather than a short-term cash-flow problem. Perhaps then he would better understand why threats to deduct salary have led academics at Sussex and across the UK to stand firm in their action rather than cave in.

Dr Martin Coward, International Relations

Framework agreement is a separate issue

I obviously don’t agree with the Vice Chancellor’s position over the current pay dispute, but I would like to lay to rest one particularly irritating “fact” that the VC is continually using to blur the debate.

In open meetings, and now in the Bulletin (VC’s voice 26 May), the Vice-Chancellor has tried to imply that the framework agreement will deliver something like 3%-5% on academic salaries. He skirts around this (at times talking about costs rather than pay), though occasionally he adds the figures (pay offer and framework costs) together. There are several problems with what he’s saying.

Firstly, in large parts of the country the framework has already been implemented and is properly being understood as a quite separate issue. People are already getting paid on it (and some are getting that pay back-dated). Let’s be clear: the framework is a previous settlement about other issues. It is not part of this pay round and it is misleading of the VC to suggest that it is. If Sussex had been on the ball, we’d already be benefiting from the framework. As it is, we are at the tail-end of a very long queue in terms of implementation.

Secondly, implementation of the framework has been separately funded, with ongoing costs rolled into core funding. It’s quite plainly different money with a different purpose. Sussex, I understand, has received about £3 million to date. I’m sure staff would love to know where that particular pot of cash has gone, as it doesn’t seem to have been used for its intended purpose (rewarding staff).

Thirdly, I believe Sussex is budgeting about 1.5% costs for framework implementation (not the 3%-5% implied).

Paul Cecil, Sussex AUT Executive

Residences all wired up

The large-scale project to give all Sussex students living on campus access to a network connection is close to completion.

The Residential Network (‘ResNet’) allows students who have their own desktop or laptop computer to check their email, surf the web and connect to the University intranet – and all from the comfort of their study bedroom.

Connections in the majority of residences were live by the end of April 2006, with the result that there are now well over 2,000 ResNet-enabled network points on campus. Parts of Holland House in Hove and all bedrooms in the King’s Road residence in Brighton are also wired up.

The connection of Brightelmth and Lewes Court 1 residences to ResNet, due to be completed by mid June, means that all study bedrooms on campus will have a dedicated wired connection.
Drinking or playing? 
Men’s health and masculinity

Men across the nation will be getting the pints in and staring at the big screen this month as the World Cup kicks off in Germany. But what do football and alcohol have to do with being a man? A study by a Sussex psychologist reveals that the crowds may be drinking their way through the game in an effort to compensate for not being man enough to play in it.

The study involved discussion groups and in-depth interviews with 31 young men (aged 18–21) in inner London from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds. It investigates what the young men consider to be masculine behaviour and how this affects their health.

Dr Richard de Visser explains: "What is really interesting about the study is the idea of using one type of typically masculine behaviour to compensate for another. For example, men who are not confident in their sporting abilities may try and make up for this by drinking excessively."

Because some men engage in unhealthy masculine behaviour, while others build their masculine identities through positive behaviour such as sport, the policy implications are huge. The project calls for greater understanding of attitudes to masculinity in health promotion.

"It seems that many young men aspire to an idea of masculinity that includes emotional and physical toughness, being the bread-winner, confidence in risk-taking and sexual confidence," says Richard. "A variety of behaviours, some that have a positive impact on health, some that have a negative, are employed to develop and demonstrate such masculine identities."

Young men’s health is currently an area of serious concern, with adolescent and young adult men being more likely to drink excessively and use illegal drugs, to engage in risky casual sex and to be killed or injured in road traffic accidents. This research shows that understanding the desire to appear masculine may hold the potential to reduce such unhealthy behaviour.

"If these findings are used effectively," says Richard, "they may be able to have an impact on the growing levels of anti-social behaviour such as binge drinking, violence and illicit drug-use. Young men could be encouraged to develop a competence in a healthy typically male area – such as football – to resist social pressures to engage in unhealthy masculine behaviours."

The study, which was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), forms part of an ongoing investigation into masculine identities by the Psychology department at Sussex. Full findings are due to be published in Psychology and Health and the Journal of Health Psychology later this year.

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Drama on the rounds pitch

More than 150 staff participated in the Staff Sports Afternoon, which took place on Friday 2 June after the scheduled date of 19 May was, in typically British fashion, abandoned due to rain. The staff formed 11 rounds teams, two netball teams, four tennis doubles and a pool league.

Freida McCormack captains the IDS netball team, which beat Sussex Slammers (Sussex House) 14–3. David Gillman (Student Systems) won the pool competition and Maggie Daniels and Andy Black (Life Sciences) won the tennis doubles league.

The real drama occurred on the rounds pitch. In the final match, Mark Hosmer was the last man batting for Physically Challenged (the Physics and Astronomy team) and achieved the remarkable feat of three successive rounds. He scored at least half the team’s rounds single-handedly and his enthusiasm was such that his rounds bat broke after a particularly hard slog of the ball.

As a result, Physically Challenged (captained by James Karamath) ran out the overall winners, beating Rounds R Us (ITS, captain Nicola McGilligan) 9–3.5.

Luke Terrell, Sports Development Officer, said: "I’m glad to see that this third annual Staff Sports Afternoon was enjoyed by so many. Luckily the weather remained dry for the whole afternoon, meaning that the participants could enjoy a well-earned barbeque after their matches."

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FIRST CLASS

Finance assistant Josh Guilmant obviously knows a thing or two about money, because on 31 May he made £375 in just a quarter of an hour – but he had to run like the wind to do it. In the first 5km race of a series organised by Benhill Runners, Josh’s time of 15 minutes and 44 seconds broke the course record (which had stood since July 2001) by five seconds and won him £325, in addition to £50 for the victory itself.
Jacqui Bealing
Senior Press Officer

Academic expertise goes a long way in media terms, as Nat Copsey found when he helped Sky News with their reports on the Pope’s visit to Poland (27 May).

Nat’s knowledge of eastern Europe proved so useful that not only did he do a live broadcast as scheduled at 12.30pm, he continued to be interviewed throughout the day and has negotiated a fee for when he makes future appearances. Fame and money – and it’s not even ‘Big Brother’.

Others who have given their time to broadcasters, lucratively or otherwise, during the past few weeks include Professor Jim Rolfo, who was interviewed by BBC Radio 4 News (16 May) about what he thought would happen in terms of migration when Romania and Bulgaria join the EU, and Dr Clive Webb, who was on Melvyn Bragg’s Radio 4 show ‘In Our Time’ (8 June) discussing Harriet Beecher Stowe’s anti-slavery novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, who’s no stranger to the media these days, was interviewed by Channel Five News reporter Zara (the daughter of former VC Professor Sir Gordon Conway) for a general piece about AUT action. The piece, including some glorious footage of our sunny campus, lovely library and articulate students, was aired on 30 May.

Meanwhile Dr Peter Holmes was off campus at Charleston Farmhouse, giving his case for the eminence of economist John Maynard Keynes in a BBC Two series ‘The People’s Museum’ (24 May).

In print, Professor Richard Black’s research in human geography made a ‘Work in progress’ article in the Guardian (16 May), while Dr Helga Dittmar’s revelations that the ultra-thin shape of Barbie dolls lowers young girls’ self esteem was exposed in the Sunday Times (14 May).

Few publications can generate as much nostalgia as Radio Times. But a set of the listings magazine that has just been donated to the University Library isn’t intended to stir up memories of ‘The Archers’ or the first ‘Dr Who’: it will provide a resource for serious academic research.

The Chris Griffin-Beale Radio Times collection, which has just been cleaned and boxed for storage by Library staff, covers the years 1955–89.

“I am sure our academic colleagues will be delighted to have access to this extension of our holdings of the Radio Times,” says Dorothy Sheridan, Head of Special Collections. “We expect it to be of particular interest to the departments of English Literature, History, Art History and Media Studies.”

Christopher Griffin-Beale was obsessed with television practically from his birth in 1947. At the age of eight he started collecting the Radio Times and from then on he never missed a week.

When Christopher left home in 1966 to study Russian and English at Sussex, his parents kept up the collection for him and nobly stored it in their loft. He loved Sussex, where he edited a weekly magazine programme on the nascent university television service.

After graduation, Christopher made a career out of his interest in television: he worked for the BBC and then as deputy editor of the leading trade magazine, Broadcast, before going to the new Channel 4 in 1981 as its chief press officer. He used his copies of Radio Times as source material in his work, for reference.

When he got married and bought his own house, his parents had insisted that he take back his collection of Radio Times. By the time Christopher died suddenly in 1996, he had built a whole wall of shelves to hold it – and there were more in the loft and study. “They were fantastically dusty,” recalls his wife Lucy.

Lucy was keen to continue the Griffin-Beale family’s connection with Sussex (where the couple’s eldest daughter also studied, graduating in 2000) and eventually arranged to donate the collection to the University “so that they could be used by other students like Chris, with a passion for the media”.

Newsprint is notorious for its rate of deterioration and the fragile collection is now stored in dark, environmentally controlled conditions to slow down decay.

Its arrival means that Lucy has finally got her house back. She has mixed emotions, feeling “relief, but sad as well”. She’s confident, though, that Christopher would be delighted his treasured Radio Times have ended up at Sussex.
Cultural exchange with Erasmus

The International Programmes Officer, Emily Sinclair, was at an award ceremony on 5 June to receive the European Quality Label for the University’s work in promoting and implementing an international exchange programme.

Emily co-ordinates the Sussex end of the Erasmus exchange programme, which enables students to study abroad and facilitates teaching visits by academic staff to partner institutions.

Contact Emily on e.sinclair@sussex.ac.uk or ext. 7033 for further information about placements to study abroad and teacher mobility through the Erasmus programme.

Tamara Fawcett (International Relations with Modern Languages)
Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Spain 2005/06

I was nervous when I first arrived in Madrid and the prospect of a year there seemed a little daunting. However, leaving now seems impossible to do.

Adapting to a different culture for a year can be difficult at times, but the good aspects far outweigh the bad. Being an Erasmus student immediately creates a link between you and everyone else in your situation. You end up becoming friends with people from all over the world. You learn about the country’s culture and you learn from your new friends too.

The most incredible aspect is being able to communicate easily in another language. This was my biggest achievement, and something I feel lucky to have had the chance to do. It showed me that living abroad does not need to be scary and I now cannot wait until I graduate and choose another country to spend time living and working in.

The most useful aspect of my year abroad is having successfully spent a year in a Spanish university; I definitely feel more ready and less worried about going into my final year. It’s an experience that everyone should think about.

Professor Peter Drewett (CCE)
Instituto Politecnico de Tomar
Portugal 2006

The Instituto Politecnico de Tomar was one of four new universities largely funded by the EU following Portugal joining the European Union.

When I first visited Tomar the university was in a cramped historic building in the centre of town, but now it has an extensive new campus on the edge of Tomar.

Archaeology was one of the first subjects established to fill the geographic gap between Lisbon and Oporto. I was closely involved with this new department in its early days as part of one of the first Erasmus programmes.

The young lecturer employed to set up the department is now its Professor of Archaeology and more recently also director of its International Office. It was therefore a great pleasure to renew this link, particularly as the Tomar department and archaeology at Sussex’s Centre for Continuing Education have developed along similar lines, concentrating on field archaeology and heritage management in the landscape.

My seven-day visit involved a wide range of seminars, field and museum visits round both Tomar and Lisbon, as well as endless eating and drinking with my hosts.

Academically, socially and politically, Erasmus exchanges have much to recommend them. The weather is also much better – 25°C in Lisbon when I was there, while Sussex was still 3°C!

Prof Rupert Brown (Psychology)
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan
Italy 2006

I have been involved in inter-university exchanges in Europe for the past 20 years. Designed to facilitate reciprocal study and teaching visits, I have always found Erasmus exchanges to be extremely rewarding experiences for students and faculty alike: students are often exposed to novel ideas, get to experience different teaching methods, and have the opportunity to acquire valuable new research techniques; faculty can forge useful research collaborations with their colleagues abroad and can recruit bright new undergraduate or postgraduate students.

My short visit to Milan in March provided an excellent illustration of these many benefits.

During my stay, I presented a research colloquium on collective guilt to postgraduates and staff in the Psychology department at Cattolica University. As a direct result of this seminar, a DPhil student there who works on intergroup reconciliation will probably link up with one of my own students working in the Balkans.

Following this seminar, I met with researchers in the Institute of Family Studies to discuss future research collaboration, building on the productive links already established by Dr Viv Vignoles, one of my colleagues in Psychology here at Sussex.

The visit also involved a guest lecture to 350 undergraduates. At the request of my hosts, I gave this lecture in my awful Italian, hazardous though that undoubtedly was to student comprehension. Of course, the students were much too polite to comment on my execrable accent and seemed pleased to have the chance to receive a lecture from the author of one of their course texts.
E-learning update

You may have heard of LifeSci Interactive and of Study Direct. These are web-based systems running on campus that allow students to access course resources, read lecture notes, participate in online discussion forums and much more. They are both based on Moodle, which is a learning management system/virtual learning environment (VLE).

There are now plans to integrate these two systems under the name Study Direct, and to make the system available more widely for the academic year 2006/2007.

The team undertaking this work consists of staff from IT Services and the Web Team, and includes Paolo Oprandi, who has worked with Moodle in Life Sciences for a number of years. The project is being managed by Carol Shergold.

A key part of the implementation work will be integrating Study Direct with the central University student and course data, so that courses can automatically be populated with all the students who are enrolled on them. This part of the work has been funded by the national Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) as the "Minted" project.

Links will also be built to Study Direct from Sussex Direct, so that students can access their Study Direct course pages in a very easy and intuitive way.

As well as building on the considerable expertise that Life Sciences have developed, this initiative builds on the work of the Pathfinder Project. This project, which was co-ordinated by the Teaching and Learning Development Unit (TLDU) and ITS, transferred around 50 existing web-based courses into Moodle.

The implementation of Study Direct is being carried out in close collaboration with the TLDU and supports the e-learning strategy, published in autumn 2005. The TLDU anticipates that some projects funded in the 2006 round of the Teaching and Learning Development Fund (TLDF) will use Study Direct.

For more information, see the Study Direct web pages at www.sussex.ac.uk/elearning. This page will be updated regularly with news about Study Direct.

To register an interest for one or more courses to use Study Direct for 2006/07, email StudyDirect@sussex.ac.uk.

Befriend an international student

If you’re a member of staff who previously studied at Sussex, the Development & Alumni Office are keen to encourage you to take part in a popular and expanding scheme.

The Alumni Host programme, now in its second year, brings international students at Sussex together with alumni in order to promote cultural exchange and enable friendships to develop.

Alumni Officer Pia Toikka says: “Sussex deserves its reputation as a truly international university, with over 25 per cent of students coming from different corners of the world. It can be daunting for international students to arrive alone in a new country, but those who manage to immerse themselves in the culture tend to flourish. They invariably gain a new international perspective and a greater understanding of the people and the culture of the country in which they have chosen to study.”

It was with this in mind that the programme was launched in 2005, giving international students a chance to benefit from the local knowledge of alumni, practise their English and make friends outside the University environment.

A network of alumni volunteers quickly grew of those who were willing to share some time with students, showing them the local area, providing a home-cooked meal, or simply meeting for a coffee and a chat.

"I was an exchange student in Berlin in 1990 so I know what it feels like to arrive in an unfamiliar place," says alumni host Rachel Rainbow. "I would have loved to meet a former student who could introduce me to local culture, suggest some sites to visit and generally help me orientate myself, so I had no hesitation in volunteering as a host.

"We had a very enjoyable time introducing our host student Vela to some of the highlights of Brighton and our relationship became very much a cultural exchange, with information flowing both ways."

Former host student Savannah Lengsfelder shares Rachel's enthusiasm for the scheme. "I did not hesitate to apply to be paired with a local alumni. I hoped to gain a broader understanding of what it means to be British and I was not disappointed.

"Thanks to the scheme I've examined my home country [the USA] from a new perspective and been given an intimate view of the British people and their way of life."

For further information on the programme or to get involved, email alumni@sussex.ac.uk.

Sussex graduate wins award for learning

A Sussex graduate who left school more than 40 years ago with no qualifications has received a regional award for adult learners.

Jacqui Veazeys, aged 57, was presented with a Senior Learner Award by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) as part of its Adult Learners' Week from 20 to 26 May.

As a single mum on benefits, Jacqui spent many years at home looking after her children. One day she realised that by helping herself and improving her skills she could help her family too.

"I knew that I eventually wanted a worthwhile job or career and would need qualifications ... so I studied as an adult learner to improve the situation of my family," she says.

Jacqui's learning journey started at an adult education college and progressed via the Open University to a part-time MA in English Literature at Sussex from 1992–95. She will begin work on a doctorate at Sussex in the autumn.
Netting traps birds

Earlier today (30 May) there was a young starling trapped in the netting above the Chichester 1 courtyard and hanging helplessly by one leg. Another starling, possibly the bird’s parent, and itself similarly trapped, hung dead right next to it.

After several hours, and following attendance by the RSPCA and the Fire Service, neither of whom were able to help, someone from Estates and myself succeeded in freeing the terrified bird by using a long pole with a plastic bottle attached to shake it up and down in the netting until it fell free.

I feel certain the young starling, which flew around the courtyard before huddling on a windowsill, was injured in the process because its leg was now dangling helplessly. I feel sure it won’t survive and it was distressing for all present to see the hapless creature suffer.

Was this netting really such a good idea? I wonder how many more birds, some of them quite probably protected species, will suffer a slow and lingering death trapped in this way?

Andy Clews, IT Services

Neil Troak, Maintenance Manager in Estates, replies:

This netting was put up some years ago, at the request of the building users, to keep out heron gulls and other such larger birds from that courtyard area.

Clearly if the smaller birds, which we are trying to protect and support, are getting caught in the netting then it can be taken down.

We will monitor the situation over the next few months to see if this is a recurring problem and then decide if the netting stays or goes.

Ouch!

Tuesday morning, I am cycling onto campus near Barclays Bank, hotly pursued by an accelerating bus. I stick out my arm, signalling my intention to turn left into the cycle path. But it is blocked by a line of pedestrians walking ten abreast. Swinging wide onto a thin patch of grass to avoid them, my bike topples over and dumps me onto concrete. Ouch. Estates, can we have a clearer sign telling pedestrians not to do this?

Jenny Gristock, SPRU

A walk on the wild side

This month finds us reporting a mixed bag of fortunes among the campus wildlife.

For starters it’s nice to be able to report real successes. Five years back we described the various orchids that had been reported on campus and drew particular attention to the White Hellebores. The best place to see these was in the shaded area immediately to the west of the Thermo-Fluids Research Centre.

A few were also growing around the base of the trees between the road and the meadow to the west of the Aisin-Seki Centre. These completely disappeared a few years ago as a result of over-enthusiastic strimming around the trees. Happily last autumn the powers that be were persuaded to leave the area uncut and as a result we have the largest number of White Hellebores ever.

Another plant currently in full flower is the Stinging Nettle! “Flower,” we hear you saying, “is not something nettles do.” However, a close look should reveal strings of cabbagelike flowers in bunches in the axils of the upper leaves. Nettles are dioecious, with separate male and female plants, hence their Latin name, Urtica dioica. Each flower consists of four tiny pale reddish sepals, the males with four stamens and the females with a single plumelike stigma.

As is often the case with heavily defended plants, nettles are highly nutritious but when boiled taste almost as unappetising as school spinach.

Sadly, walking around campus at night reveals lights blazing from many empty rooms. The bright windows attract various insects. Two species are unusually common this year.

The first is the Cockchafer, or ‘May Bug’, a large, brown beetle. Adults chew tree leaves, but their plump white larvae feed underground for up to three years on plant roots, especially those of grasses.

The second is a greyish moth called the ‘Silver Y’, which is a summer visitor from southern Europe. Females lay their eggs on low-growing plants, including Stinging Nettles, and then die. There is time for two generations here before the last brood fly south.

This spring, for reasons best known to themselves, two pairs of Henning Gulls found the safety of the colonies on campus roofs to nest on the ground, each pair alone in their own car park. In each case the male and female collaborated to build a mound of vegetation at the base of a small tree and then took turns to incubate two or three eggs. Both nests failed early in incubation, which ought to have lasted about four weeks.

Even if the eggs had survived, the chicks would have been horribly vulnerable to traffic because they wander from the nest shortly after hatching but cannot fly for another five weeks. Perhaps it as well these pioneering nests failed; few car owners would welcome yet more ‘whitewash’ on their vehicles.
**Academic events**

**MON 12 JUN**
9am SPRU seminar: John Cantwell (Rutgers Business School), International corporate technological strategies: The balance between exploitation and exploration. Freeman Centre.

**TUE 13 JUN**
6.30pm Professional lecture: Simon Coleman (Sussex), Actors of history? The Christian right in America. BSMS LT.

**WED 14 JUN**
1pm Genome seminar: Graeme Smith (KdOs Pharmaceuticals), The discovery of DNA repair pathway inhibitors. GDSC seminar room.

**THU 15 JUN**
1pm IDS seminar: Alison Evans (IDS), Dilemmas and debates over doubling aid to Africa. IDS 221.

**MON 19 JUN**
2.30pm Neuroscience seminar: Daniel Osoro (Sussex), Cuttlefish stories: Camouflage and signalling on the sea-floor.

**WED 20 JUN**
1pm Genome seminar: Thorsten Alers (Nottingham), DNA recombination and repair in Archaea. GDSC seminar room.

**FRI 23 JUN**
2.15pm SPRU-CENTRIM seminar: Algieal Marks (Heriot-Watt), title tbc. Freeman G24/G25.

**Small ads**

**Wanted**
Family for French student (21 yrs old, English degree) to improve her English. Can help with daily tasks & give French lessons. Free July and/or Aug. Audrey Bouarcharde at audrey281@tiscali.fr.

**To let**
Studio flat in purpose-built block, Lewes. £550 pcm. E: J. aesley@ussex.ac.uk.

**For sale**

**To let**
House in Roundhill area. 3-4 beds, 30ft garden. Available mid June. £1,200 ppcm. T: 077 769 68698.

**For sale**
Electric piano, Roland R7000. 1 yr old. Original packing, manual, pedal, etc. SRX-02 Concert Grand card also available. £800. T: Tim Hudson on ext. 7104, E: j.hudson@sussex.ac.uk.

**Wanted**
Short- or long-term flat/house share for clean, tidy & easy-going 23-yr-old female. Currently finishing PG course, then will be working full time. Central-ish B'ton. Under £350 ppcm. E: aluthmann@hotmail.co.uk.

**To let**
2-bed house with sea views, on 25 bus route. End June-mid Sep. (poss. negotiable). Suit visiting researcher. May involve feeding cat. £600pcm. E: jaffe2@sussex.ac.uk.

**For sale**
Windsurfer. Chapter 295 Concave 6, board only. Ideal first shortboard. £45. T: 414467.

**Wanted**
Childminder for 2 young children, in July. Rates reg. T: Ruth on ext. 7451 or 600701.

**To let**
1-bed flat in B'ton (St. James’s area). Short let from end June (or early July) to end Sep. E: 6227@sussex.ac.uk.

**To let**

**For sale**
Rotary lawn mower (petrol). £30; electric strimmer £10; metal garden shed £50. T: Janet on ext. 8543 or E: tidbuf@sussex.ac.uk.

**For sale**
Adams Trail-a-Bike, Folds for storage. Purple. Suit child 2-10yrs. £50. Ext. 86909, E: afields@sussex.ac.uk.

**To let**
Central-Hove flat. From mid July for 6 mths. Nr station, sea, shops, 25 buses. £700 pcm. E: k.a.hiles@sussex.ac.uk.

**News in brief**

**EFM roadshow at 14 June**
How does the University spend income from car-parking charges? What’s in the Travel Plan? How are the campus grounds managed? What’s in our Biodiversity Plan? How do we recycle waste? For the answers to these and many more questions, come to the ground floor of Arts C foyer on Wednesday 14 June, 10am-1pm transport management; 10am-4pm grounds management; 1-4pm waste and recycling.

**Open day 17 June**
Campus will be very busy during the Undergraduate Open Day on Saturday 17 June, with more than 2,000 prospective students and their families arriving from 9am onwards. The Science and Manteil car parks will be closed for visitor parking.

**Bike Week 17–25 June**
There’s a reward for all cyclists to campus on Thursday 22 June: between 8.15am and 9.45 am the Transport Manager will serve a Bike Breakfast – bagels and other refreshments – from the steps of the Meeting House. The Bike Doctor will offer free cycle check-ups from 10am until 3.30pm.

**Taxi!**
While the bus service across campus is suspended, a replacement on-campus taxi service is in operation until the end of term. It will be in operation Mondays to Fridays from 8-10am and 4-6pm. If you are in need of transport across campus, call the Estates Helpdesk on ext. 7777 and request a car.

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**It's competition time again**

The latest in the University’s series of hotel competitions gives you the opportunity to win a midweek stay at the Hotel Seattle (including dinner, bed and breakfast).

To enter, all you have to do is answer two questions: where is the Hotel Seattle located, and how many different room types are there?

The answers are in the list of University-approved hotels and guest houses at [www.sussex.ac.uk/about/hotels](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/about/hotels).

Send your answers with your name, status (e.g. member of staff/student/algorithm) and contact details to c.lehany@sussex.ac.uk. The closing date is 30 June.

The winner of the last competition will be enjoying a free stay at the Ramada Brighton hotel as a result of her simple bit of online research.

Anna Mulholland, an undergraduate studying Media Practice and Theory, looked at the list of University-approved hotels and guest houses to find the hotel’s special University of Sussex rate for a single room on a Wednesday night (£60, in case you’re wondering). Anna’s reward is a room for two for one night’s bed and breakfast.

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 bulletin

The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Claire Potter, with contributions from Jacquie Bealing, Maggie Clune and Rob Read. We welcome any news, story ideas, letters or small ads from the staff and students of the University. The next issue will be out on 23 June, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 16 June. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 88888 or email bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.