Farewell to outgoing PVCs and welcome to new ones

It was all smiles at an informal drinks party on 31 August to mark the contribution to the University’s academic leadership of two outgoing senior managers.

Professor Tony Moore (pictured left) was a pro-vice-chancellor for a year prior to his appointment as Deputy Vice-Chancellor in 2001. During his tenure Tony has focused on the management of research (including preparation for the forthcoming Research Assessment Exercise) and has been responsible for enhancing the economic impact of research output from Sussex - a role that has included chairing the board of the Sussex Innovation Centre.

Stepping down from the responsibilities of senior management will enable Tony to return to his research work as a professor of biochemistry.

Since his appointment as a pro-vice-chancellor in 2002, Professor John Dearlove (on the right of the picture) has led new initiatives in recruitment across the full range of subjects, at graduate as well as undergraduate level, and for overseas as well as home students. Although he has stepped down as a pro-vice-chancellor, John will continue with an ambassadorial role, focusing on the recruitment of international students.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, said: “The work that the outgoing PVCs have done and will continue to do for Sussex has been outstanding. I would like to thank both Tony and John for their contribution to the management of the University over the last few years and I wish them well in the future.”

On 1 September the Vice-Chancellor welcomed three new pro-vice-chancellors, who all started work at Sussex on the same day.

Professor Paul Layzell has taken up the role of PVC (Resources) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. He will provide leadership on business planning and resource allocation.

Professor Bob Allison is PVC (Research), taking responsibility for the research agenda at Sussex. A physical geographer, Bob was previously Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health at Durham University.

As PVC (Education), Professor Joanne Wright has responsibility for teaching and learning and the student experience. Prior to her appointment, Joanne was Dean of the Faculty of History and Social Sciences at Royal Holloway, University of London.

In addition to their other PVC responsibilities, Bob and Joanne will provide senior management support and advice to individual Deans.

The Vice-Chancellor said: “The new PVCs will play a vital role in shaping and supporting the future direction and development of Sussex.”

New Director of Planning

Louise Nalad became the University’s new Director of Planning on 1 September. She joins Sussex from Royal Holloway, where she has been Head of Planning since 2001.

Specialist academic bookshop takes over campus bookshop

A specialist academic bookshop took over the running of the campus bookshop on 1 September. John Smith & Son, which runs academic bookshops at 15 British universities including Glasgow and Aston, has bought the business and stock and is leasing the premises at a commercial rate.

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the decision to sell the business to John Smith’s, the only UK chain that focuses exclusively on academic and professional books. “We welcome John Smith’s to the campus and look forward to a fruitful working relationship,” said Professor Alasdair Smith.

Kristian Berggreen, who manages the University bookshop and has more than 40 years’ experience in bookselling, was equally positive about the change. “Small, independent academic bookshops do not have the chains’ buying power,” he said. “This decision will protect book retailing on campus and offer opportunities for business development and growth.”

It is expected that the company will invest in modernising the shop and – in the longer term – in the University-led redevelopment of the ground floor of Bramber House. “We really value the opportunity to work with one of the country’s top universities,” said Terry Field, managing director of John Smith’s.

Students and staff can expect a high quality of service, consistent with the fact that John Smith’s is currently Academic & Professional Chain Bookseller of the Year. A formal agreement covers issues such as the supply of books on course reading lists. The 10% staff discount on books is likely to continue and all customers can expect to benefit from a raft of offers and promotions.

Subject to the Body Shop’s agreement to transfer the franchise, John Smith’s is keen to continue operating the Body Shop outlet on the bookshop premises.

There will also be continuity of service: on 1 September all transferring staff became employees of John Smith’s, in accordance with regulations on the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment), or TUPE. “We value the expertise and experience that the existing staff will bring to the business,” said Terry Field. The University consulted fully with bookshop staff and unions during the transitional period.
Cancer scientists receive £5.6 million to fund research

Grants totalling £5.6 million have been made to cancer scientists at the University's world-renowned Genome Damage and Stability Centre.

The funding by the Medical Research Council (MRC) for the next five years ensures that Professors Penny Jeggo, Tony Carr and Alan Lehmann can further their research into some of the causes and consequences of cell damage.

Alan, chairman of the Genome Centre, commented: "We are thrilled to have been awarded these large grants. The proposals all got high scores from the MRC awarding panels, which is terrific recognition of the quality of our research. Our work is designed to understand fundamental processes inside cells, but it has many important implications for understanding, diagnosing and curing human diseases."

Damage to the DNA molecules that make up our genomes is the fundamental cause of cancer. The ability of our cells to repair this damage is a major way of protecting us from cancer. These cellular defence processes are also crucial for correct development of our immune and neurological systems and they stop us from ageing prematurely.

Professor Penny Jeggo's grant of £1.5 million is for two related projects. The first deals with the repair of a particularly lethal type of damage in which both strands of the DNA double helix are broken. These breaks are difficult to repair and, if not repaired properly, can lead to immune deficiencies and developmental delay. Penny is also investigating how cells send signals from the damaged DNA to the rest of the cell. Deficiencies in "damage signalling" can result in neurological and immune disorders and Penny is working to devise diagnostic tests and ultimately alleviate these conditions.

Professor Tony Carr has gained international renown for his work on DNA damage signalling using the fission yeast as a model system. His work has shown that damage signalling is an intricate process involving many components and that it co-ordinates many different biological functions. His new grant of £2.2 million will enable him to continue his study of how some of these components carry out the different steps in the signalling processes and how they interact with other pathways in the cell. He will also be collaborating with Penny in extrapolating the findings from his work with yeast into human cell studies.

Part of Professor Alan Lehmann's £2.1 million grant is to further his research in the cell enzyme processes that lead to sunlight-induced skin cancer. He is also studying a new "enzyme machine" that his group have discovered. They know that it has many components and is needed to repair certain types of DNA damage, and they are trying to find out how it works and if defects result in known diseases.

More than half of breast cancer patients may skip medication

More than 50% of women taking medication for breast cancer have either forgotten to take their drugs or have chosen not to do so at some point during their treatment, new research suggests.

The study by the Psychosocial Oncology Group at the Brighton and Sussex Medical School - published in this month's European Journal of Cancer - found that while most women who skipped their medication forgot to take it, around one in six of the women made a deliberate decision not to take their treatment.

Reasons for not taking medication included finding tablets hard to swallow, difficulty in coping with side-effects such as hot flushes, and finding medication a constant reminder of their illness.

The research team, which is funded by Cancer Research UK, concluded that clear communication about the advantages and disadvantages of treatments may help patients overcome these obstacles.

Lead author Louise Atkins said: "Not taking a full course of medication could impact on how effective a treatment will be. If we can understand more about the reasons some women don't take their medication, we'll be in a better position to help women overcome these difficulties."

Treatment for breast cancer usually involves a combination of surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy, often followed by a daily hormone tablet or monthly injection for up to five years. The researchers wanted to know how well women adhered to their follow up-treatment.

They held one-to-one interviews with 131 women who were at least two years past their initial breast-cancer diagnosis and currently receiving medication. Researchers asked each woman, "How often do you forget to take your tablets?" and then, "How often do you choose not to take your medication?"

Seventy-two women said there were times when they didn't take their medication. Of these, 12 said there were times when they intentionally did not take the tablet. The majority of all the women not taking their medication - around 83 per cent - said it was because they forgot.

Space telescope unveils the birth and death of stars

Two Sussex scientists say that new data from an infrared space telescope will help astronomers to model how galaxies form and evolve.

Dr Seb Oliver and Dr Richard Savage have been working with a UK team of scientists on analysing data produced by the AKARI telescope, which blasted off from Japan in February.

The telescope has returned new images showing the earliest stages of star formation and the final stages of the death of stars in our galaxy.

The quality of this data has delighted the Japanese, UK and Dutch team members and shown the power of this new telescope for studies of astronomical objects of our own Galaxy.

Richard said: "These images are a glimpse of a vast range of science that AKARI is beginning to address. It's fantastic to think how far we've come since launch and even more exciting how much further we'll be able to go in the coming months."

Seb added: "Results like this help us understand the relation between mass and light in our own galaxy. This understanding can then be used to help us weigh galaxies earlier in the history of the Universe, which in turn helps us model how galaxies form and evolve."
New heating system: progress to date and the next phase

David Kirkwood
Director of Estates & Facilities Management

Few people will have missed the fact that the renewal of the campus heating system has been underway this summer.

This summer’s work

Since the project started in June, almost 7km of heating pipe has been buried around campus under various roads, paths and grassed areas, including a link under the A27 to the new student residence being built next to Falmer station.

As the cooler (and hopefully wetter) weather arrives in the autumn and the grass starts to grow back, almost all traces of this summer’s work will disappear. Note, though, that it will take a while before the grass returns.

Next summer’s work

There is still over half of the project to be completed, with lots of work programmed for summer 2007.

In May 2007, once the heating is switched off, the aged boilers and pumps in the Boiler House will be replaced with modern, energy-efficient gas boilers and associated equipment.

In addition, a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) unit will be fitted that will provide hot water to all buildings on the network year-round, as well as electricity at half the cost of buying it from our normal suppliers.

While that work is being done, more than 40 plant rooms in various buildings around campus must be refurbished to work properly with the new system.

The final connections to the new distribution network, laid this summer, will also need to be made. This will involve some excavation of roads and paths – but very little in comparison to this year.

What will this all achieve?

By October 2007 the new system will be fully operational. It will use at least 25% less gas than the existing system, saving the University almost £250,000 per year in heating costs. Additionally it will provide about a quarter of all our electricity at about half the normal cost. It will also dramatically reduce the University’s carbon emissions and our overall impact on the environment.

Importantly it will be reliable (which the old system certainly wasn’t), allowing all new buildings built on campus in the future to be connected to this system. It will also be easier, and consequently cheaper, to maintain and operate.

So while the disruption has been significant this summer, I hope you will agree that the benefits of the completed project will make it all worthwhile.

For further information, contact either myself on ext. 8144 or Paul Feast on ext. 8262.

Above: Almost 7km of heating pipe has been buried around campus under various roads, paths and grassed areas.

Left: Diggers have been a common sight on campus over the summer.

Campus fly posters will be fined

Since 4 September, Environmental Enforcement Officers from Brighton & Hove City Council have been regularly patrolling campus to monitor any fly posting activity and to issue relevant fines – currently set at £75 per illegal poster or flyer.

The University has invited the council to carry out this regular enforcement action, which is carried out under a number of acts including Environmental Highways and Criminal Damage.

Enforcement action in Brighton itself has delivered a marked reduction in street furniture (bins, seats, bollards, etc.).

Andy Jupp, Head of Facilities Management in Estates, said: “Fly posting is unsightly and affects the overall presentation of the campus. With ever-increasing competition from other universities, there is a real need to keep our grounds, buildings and street furniture presentable, and at the same time put a stop to this environmental concern.

“At last we will be able to control external companies, including clubs and pubs, that in the past have littered our campus with posters.”

The Students’ Union has invited local companies to advertise officially to the University’s 12,000 students on its walls-mounted poster boards, recently installed in partnership with Estates.

Enforcement applies only to these external companies and not to schools, units, student societies, companies based on campus, etc. Open days, the Welcome Weekend and other such events are also exempt from enforcement action. But Andy said: “Of course, fixing posters to street furniture and/or trees is not acceptable and should not be done by any group.”

For further information on campus fly posting, email Andy at a.r.jupp@sussex.ac.uk.
When Sussex was a children’s playground

Sussex in the Sixties – a radical new approach to higher education, the glamour of the Jay twins, Nissen huts, student protests...

Jacqui Bealing
Senior Press Officer
Memories of the University’s early days were rekindled among alumni and former members of staff for BBC Radio Four’s new series, ‘The Idea of a University’ (31 August). The series, presented by Martha Kearney, included an interview with her father, Professor Hugh Kearney (a former historian at Sussex), and Lord Briggs.

Would today’s students recognise the place from their descriptions? Certainly Dan Glass, the current Students’ Union president, upholds some of the traditions. In an article about “coolest campuses” he listed the independent (17 August) that “anarchy and adventure still exist.”

As for protests, the Students’ Union’s action to ban Coca-Cola products from its venues made global news, from the Independent (19 August) to Daily India (19 August).

Professor Fred Gray provided the glamour last month when he appeared on Channel Four’s ‘Richard and Judy’ show (18 August) to promote his book Designing The Seaside: Architecture, society and nature. Fred was on BBC 1’s rather less gilty ‘Country File’ (13 August) for the same reason.

Among those promoting our academic credentials last month, particularly on issues of terrorism plots and Islamophobia, were Dr Tim Baile on Bright FM (29 August), Nafeed Ahmed in the Independent on Sunday (13 August) and THES (18 August), and Dr Martin Shaw on Southern FM (11 August).

Some things about Sussex have changed since the Sixties, however. Rob Evans, head of the Undergraduate Office, told BBC Online (9 August) that students’ parents are much more interested and involved in their offspring’s university life these days, often wanting to know if their sons and daughters were doing their work or going to lectures.

And reflecting the new focus on the personal expense of higher education, Owen Richards talked to the Independent (16 August) about various bursaries now available to Sussex students.

See Sussex in the News (www.sussex.ac.uk/pressandcomm/stories/1-4-63-1.html) for more about our media coverage.

Martha Kearney, presenter of BBC’s ‘Newsnight’ and ‘Woman’s Hour’, has been revisiting her childhood memories of the University of Sussex for a major BBC Radio Four series charting the post-war history of higher education.

In the second of five programmes, broadcast on 31 August, Ms Kearney reminisced about the development of the campus by architect Basil Spence and about the temporary hut where her father – historian Professor Hugh Kearney – taught before the arts buildings were completed.

She recalled: “As a child I needed Wellington boots to visit his office, as the University grew faster than its buildings. The whole place was like a building site.” And she added: “The modernist campus with its pools and fountains made it an exciting playground for my brother and me.”

Some of the first cohort of 52 students also remembered their first impressions of the nascent campus, including Adrian Mugridge, the first president of the Students’ Union, and Carol Hedward, who has just retired after many years as an academic at Sussex.

“There were just some holes in the ground and some interested cows sort of looking at them,” remembered Carol. “We stood there on a slightly foggy autumn morning and they said, ‘This is where the University will be.’ ‘... It was a great adventure.’

The programme also featured one of the University’s founding-fathers and former vice-chancellor, Lord Briggs, who talked about the vision and ethos of the University in its early days.

The new universities were very focused on the future – shaping people who would be flexible enough to go out into the world and deal with rapid change.

But the programme also examined opposition to the national expansion in student numbers and how some of the founding ideas of the new universities contributed to student unrest at the end of the 1960s.

The last two programmes in the five-part series, ‘The Idea of a University’, presented by Martha Kearney, will be broadcast on 14 September and 21 September.

Above: Professor Hugh Kearney and his daughter Martha Kearney were on campus this summer for the recording of a radio programme about the early days of Sussex.

Left: The Gardner Arts Centre under construction in the 1960s.
Sussex historian reveals why everyone likes to be beside the seaside

A Sussex professor explained the charm of piers, pavilions and pebble beaches in a live interview with television's most popular day-time couple. Professor Fred Gray spoke about the enduring appeal of seaside holidays with Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan when he appeared on their Channel 4 chat show.

Fred said: "Most people have been to the seaside and will have both fond and miserable memories of it. Britain is the place that invented the seaside resort and there is a fascination with coming to the beach, especially among those people who live inland."

He added: "I am excited to have been invited on to the show and it is something I will probably dine out on for weeks!"

The television appearance was the latest stop in a tour to promote the publication of Fred’s book Designing the Seaside: Architecture, society and nature, charting the history of seafront buildings since the 18th century.

He was inspired to write the book – a decade in the making – after organising a touring exhibition on England's seaside architecture, with funding from the Arts Council.

Research trips to resorts from Bournemouth to Scarborough soon followed, as Fred documented everything from Punch & Judy booths to bandstands and beach huts. Fred’s research also spread to America, Europe and the Far East, where fairgrounds, boardwalks and swimming pools are regular features on the water’s edge.

Brighton’s West Pier, the newly restored De La Warr Pavilion at Bexhill in East Sussex and the Blackpool Tower are among examples of architecture discussed in Designing the Seaside. The book covers the formal and informal design processes involved in major buildings as well as ephemeral structures such as resort parks, open spaces and shops selling candy floss.

Cult Sixties film gets exhibition treatment by Sussex art historian

Original photographs and art work used in the iconic Sixties film Blow-Up are the focus of an acclaimed London exhibition co-curated by a Sussex art historian.

Professor David Alan Mellor worked with the decorative arts director at Christie's in putting together Antonioni's Blow-Up, which is at the Photographers' Gallery in London until 17 September.

Made in 1966, Blow-Up was director Michelangelo Antonioni’s first film in English and was to become one of the most important cinematic works of its decade; a seminal encapsulation of the vibrant and bohemian London scene of the period.

Its lead character, a fashion photographer played by David Hemmings, takes a sequence of photographs in a London park, apparently of a young woman (Vanessa Redgrave) in a tryst with her older lover.

On examining the negatives later, the photographer realises that the couple’s furtive behaviour perhaps hides a secret. He spots what appears to be a body in one of the photographs. But the more he enlarges the image, the more blurred and indecipherable it becomes.

The film is a voyage in which the protagonist starts to doubt both what he actually saw, and his photographic record of it, as fact and fiction are ever more ambiguously intertwined.

The film marked an extraordinary exchange of inspirations between photography, film and painting.

For the first time since the movie’s production, the paintings of Ian Stephenson, which were a powerful influence on Antonioni when he first came to London to make the film, have been brought together with rarely glimpsed photographs by Don McCullin, which Antonioni submitted to the artist to recreate on canvas.

David says: "Although the film has this Sixties’ element to it, I see it as more like a Hitchcock murder-mystery. I’ve watched people going around the exhibition and it’s fascinating to see how they are explaining the film to each other and experiencing it spatially. They are following the photographs, the stills from the film and lines from the script to get a sense of how the director put it all together."
Help students have their say

Teaching staff are being asked to promote the nomination and election of student representatives for each subject and year group at the beginning of the autumn term. "Good publicity is essential to having the best reps and making sure the scheme works effectively," says Tracey Beck, the staff co-ordinator for the scheme.

Student representatives can provide helpful feedback to staff about courses and programmes; raise concerns in a constructive manner and give feedback to other students on why particular decisions are made; and help to prevent concerns from becoming serious issues.

For details of the 2006 elections, see www.sussex.ac.uk/academicoffice/1-4-2-12.html. The site includes a link to a PowerPoint presentation designed for use in lectures in weeks 0–3, with which teaching staff can encourage students to participate, nominate themselves for election and vote.

Departments have been sent postcards about the scheme, which staff can hand out to interested students or in lectures. Staff can also encourage students to look at the USSU website (www.ussu.info/studentreps) to find out more.

The Students’ Union will do their part by putting up posters around campus to advertise the start of both the nominations and the elections.

Contact Tracey with any questions you or your students have, on t.a.beck@sussex.ac.uk or ext. 3294.

Get involved with the Post Graduate Association

The representative association for Sussex postgraduates is urging students to get involved in its activities.

The recently formed Post Graduate Association (P GA) is a platform for campaigning on welfare issues, pushing for top-quality research opportunities and encouraging greater involvement by postgraduates in Students’ Union societies.

"There are a number of issues specifically relevant to postgraduates," says Jonathan Morgan from the PGA executive. "Many of us have teaching and research responsibilities and a higher proportion of postgraduates are students with dependants."

The profile of the PGA is set to increase, with various events in the pipeline including welcome events at the start of the next academic year.

If you would like to lend a hand with campaigning and organising events, email the chair of the PGA, Enrich Kofmel, at e.kofmel@sussex.ac.uk.

NSS 2006

The results of the second National Student Survey show that finalists from Sussex were in general satisfied with the quality of their courses, the teaching and support provided, the range of resources they had available and how the courses were run.

The results were published last month, reporting final-year undergraduate views on teaching, assessment, academic support, organisation, learning resources and personal development.

Nationally, the results of the survey show a very similar pattern to that for 2005, the first year the survey was conducted. The Sussex results in 2006 are also quite similar to those for 2005.

However, while Sussex’s scores for teaching and organisation again stand up well to national comparisons, students at some other universities continue to rate their institutions more highly in areas such as assessment and personal development, suggesting that at Sussex there is room for improvement. And while scores for academic support have improved at Sussex, scores for learning resources have slipped slightly.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, said: "It’s pleasing to see our teaching scores continue to stand up well to comparison with Russell Group and other 1994 Group universities. As last year, we are disappointed that in some areas we did not score more highly and these scores reinforce the lessons we learned from the 2005 survey."

"The improvement in scores for academic support, and those in some specific-subject areas, show that action to address issues can be effective. We had already put in hand some long-term developments in relation to areas such as assessment, which will bear fruit over time. But there remain areas such as learning resources where we can do better to meet our students’ high expectations of Sussex and we will focus on these over 2006-07."

Led by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Joanne Wright, 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 that Sussex undertakes. This will identify underlying issues and how the University can continue to make improvements.

Schools and departments will reflect on what the data for individual subject areas mean for teaching and support to their students. In the social sciences and humanities, this year’s survey was completed mainly by students who started in 2003 as the new arts curriculum was first introduced and the old curriculum was being taught out. That, and the growing quality of the student intake, may have had an effect on scores at Sussex.

The survey scores will feed into league tables and provide information for potential students. However, national data exclude a number of institutions, perhaps because of low returns by students. This makes any national comparisons far less meaningful than if all institutions were included.
Is the arts world a man's world?

Would the Mona Lisa still be smiling if she had been painted by a woman? If the Sistine Chapel's ceiling had been completed by a female hand, would it still have been as popular?

Centuries of discrimination against women artists overshadowed by their male peers will be debated by leading art historians at a Sussex conference on 16 September. The work of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo and Brit sensation Tracey Emin will be examined as part of the event, titled 'Difference Reframed: Reflections on the legacies of feminist art history & visual culture'.

Professor Griselda Pollock, feminist art historian at the University of Leeds, is the guest speaker for the event, which will include papers from academics across the UK, America and Australia.

In a debate covering all aspects of feminism in art history, delegates will look at examples of collective exhibitions, comparing the representation of female and male artists and asking whether attitudes toward women in art have changed since the 1970s.

The one-day conference will interrogate traditions of feminist art history, theory and practice from contemporary feminist and other perspectives.

Anticipated issues include the place of feminism in art history and the study of visual culture today, and how the content and deployment of key theoretical concepts has changed since the 1970s.

Dr Alexandra Kokoli, an associate tutor at Sussex, says: "Feminism is no longer the 'F' word. There is still a lot of discrimination against women in large group exhibitions today and there is still a concentration of female artists are simply not as good as men."

"This conference will be a dialogue between emerging, new academics and an established scholar, like Griselda Pollock, who has had a truly shaping influence on the discipline."

Celebrating 40 years of innovation

More than 300 international scholars will attend a three-day conference to celebrate the 40th anniversary of SPRU - Science & Technology Policy Research and debate the latest research in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy.

Broad themes for discussion at the conference, with more than 150 papers due to be presented between 11 and 13 September, will include systems of innovation, STI in life-sciences, and sustainability.

The event is one of the first of its kind to be organised by SPRU since moving in November 2003 to the Freeman Centre, named after SPRU founder Professor Chris Freeman. The 40th anniversary celebrations will include a tribute to Chris, who celebrates his 85th birthday on 10 September.

Ben Martin, Professor of Science and Technology Policy Studies at SPRU, says: "The conference is not just about looking back over 40 years of work in the field and our role in that, but more importantly looking forward to the key areas where we should be focusing our attention."

"The environment and sustainability are topical issues we need to address more clearly. The research we do here is a combination of contributing to the development of the field and trying to have an impact on current policy issues such as global warming."

A walk on the wild side

At this time of year, thistles on campus attract colourful 'charms' of Goldfinches. This name for their flocks refers to the birds' liquid, tinkling calls.

David Harper
Life Sciences

David Streeter
Life Sciences

Adult Goldfinches of both sexes have a red mask and a black crown on their otherwise white heads; individuals of all ages have large, yellow bands on their black wings. These pretty birds are very acrobatic while using their finely pointed bills to eat thistle seeds. The flocks contain some local birds but most are visitors from farther north on their way to winter on the continent.

Thistles on campus come in three models. The most spectacular display, especially around the mound of waste soil at the top of the East Slope field, is provided by the Wilted Thistle, Carduus crispus, a tall handsome biennial of waste ground, roadsides and rough grassland on fertile soils throughout lowland Britain.

The most familiar is perhaps the Spear Thistle, Cirsium vulgare, which is a common weed of cultivated land, road sides and waste ground everywhere. Its name is derived from the long, sharp spear-shaped lobe that forms the tip of the leaves. 'Spear Thistle' is a direct translation of cardus lanceolatus, the name that Tabernaemontana gave the plant in 1591.

The third thistle is Creeping Thistle, Cirsium arvense, which, unlike the other two, is a perennial and also dioecious, that is it has separate male and female plants. As its name suggests, it is capable of rapid spread by its long underground stems and is more common in permanent pasture than the Spear Thistle.

Both species are serious weeds of agriculture and, together with two docks and Ragwort, are scheduled under the Weed Act, 1959, that requires landowners to exercise effective control.

You may have noticed from the Latin names that botanists have apparently made life unnecessarily complicated by placing the thistles in two separate genera, Carduus and Cirsium, based on the nature of the thistle-down — but we don't expect the Goldfinches to be troubled by such taxonomic niceties!

Goldfinches share the nickname of 'King Harry' — after Henry VIII — with the Bullfinch. Male Bullfinches are as colourful as Goldfinches, having a glossy black crown, a blue-grey back and salmon under parts. Females are much duller, but resemble the male in having white wing bars and a white rump. These white patches are often all you see as these shy birds slip away into cover, giving a mournful 'phew' call.

A good way to spot Bullfinches on campus is to visit Whitebeam trees over the next two months. When the large berries ripen from green to orange, Bullfinches split them to eat the seeds. To learn to identify Whitebeam, look at the tree by the bus stop outside Sussex House. Bullfinches prefer trees nearer to cover, such as the one in the conifers to the east of the Genome building.
FIRST CLASS ▼

Two academics with Sussex connections are on the Independent newspaper's 'Good List 2006', of 50 people "who make our world a better place". Professor Robert Chambers from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) on campus is described as an "anti-poverty guru". "His views have radically transformed the approach on the ground of aid workers right across the world," says the Independent. "Many of the great increases in the effectiveness of aid in the past two decades are down to him." Also on the list is "applied ecologist" Professor Sir Gordon Conway, Vice-Chancellor at Sussex from 1992-98.

Dr Matthew Dimmock, Lecturer in English, has co-curated a new exhibition of Islamic and British art at Tate Britain in London. 'East-West: Objects Between Cultures' places Islamic objects, chosen from public and private UK collections, alongside British paintings and sculpture from 1500.

Dr Richard Follett, Senior Lecturer in North American History, is one of three academics who have been shortlisted for a £25,000 prize to mark the year's best non-fiction book on slavery. Richard is a finalist for the Frederick Douglass Book Prize, awarded annually by the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition at Yale University. A jury of scholars selected his book, The Sugar Masters: Planters and slaves in Louisiana's cane world, 1820-1860, from a field of nearly 80 entries. The prize winner will be announced later this month.

A student who spent the summer vacation on an e-learning programming project for Brighton-based Academy Internet has come third in a competition to find Sussex's most enterprising student. Naomi Frankel, studying Computer Science with Artificial Intelligence, was taking part in the Shell Step programme, a project-based work placement scheme for undergraduates.

Julia Rietzschel, who graduated with a first class BA degree in Psychology this summer, has won the British Psychological Society prize for the best undergraduate project in psychologyobiology.

At the 14th International Oral History Conference in Sydney (12-16 June) – with around 425 participants from 31 countries – Dr Al Thomson, Reader in Continuing Education and History, was elected president of the International Oral History Association for the next two years.

Small ads ▼

For sale: Fiat Cinque, N reg., 46k miles. New MoT. £500 ono. E susansu@biols.susx.ac.uk, ext. 3918, T 01225 767240.

For sale: Chest of drawers, poss. Edwardian, approx. 3' long, £75 ono. T 01225 767240.

For sale: 4 stripped oak kitchen chairs + Cath Kidston covered seats. £20 each. £150 £100 after 6pm.

Free: Approx 150 books in US, European, Chinese left/laboour history/politics/political biography. T Justine after 11 Sep on 857840, 077906 992580, E j. stonehouse@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Room in family home in Kingston nr Lewes. Suit mature professional. £400 pcm incl. Ext. 8901.

To let: House in Hanover, from mid Sep for 1 yr. Suit responsible couple + 1. £1,072 pcm ex. E d.y.parper@sussex.ac.uk, T 608050.


To let: Garage in Hove. £50 pcm. T Bob on ext. 4300.

For sale: 2 tickets to 'Slava's Snowshow' at Brighton Theatre Royal. Sat 4 Nov, 2.30pm. £40 the pair (face value £45). T Sandra on ext. 7082 or E s. jenkins@sussex.ac.uk.

Wanted: Accommodation in B' ton or Lewes for visiting research fellow & partner from 1 Nov. Ideally, 1-bed furnished flat, for £550 p/m (+ bills) or less. E blinttiner@gmx.info.

News in brief ▼

LifeSci directors

Dr Liz Somerville will be stepping down as Director of Undergraduate Studies in the School of Life Sciences from 1 January 2007, when Dr Jane Davies will take over.

Size really matters

Simply folding an A4 letter in half to fit a C5 envelope saves the University 12p on postage since new charges took effect last month. The Royal Mail has changed the way its mail services are priced, so that the price is related to the size and weight of the items posted. This is known as 'pricing in proportion'. In general it means the University now pays the same or less for smaller items of post and more for larger items. For more about pricing in proportion and how it affects your department or unit, contact lain Monro in the Procurement Office on ext. 3308.

Know your numbers

Do you know your blood pressure? For a free check, just go to one of the following locations between 10am and 12 noon or 2pm and 4pm: Monday 11 September, Arts A106; Tuesday 12 September, BSMS foyer; Wednesday 13 September, Sport Centre reception; Thursday 14 September, Falmer Sports Complex; Friday 15 September, IDS upper common room. For more information, contact Terry Cooper on ext. 8345.

'University Challenge' broadcast 18 September

The Sussex team play Girdon College, Cambridge in the first round of BBC Two's 'University Challenge' quiz show on Monday 18 September at 8.30pm. Tune in to see how they get on.

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