Law graduate to swim the Channel for Darfur

A new Sussex Law graduate will take to the sea to swim the Channel for charity.

Van Ferguson, 21, who is currently building up his stamina through training sessions off the coast of Brighton and in local swimming pools, hopes to make the 21-mile crossing from Dover to Calais in August.

He intends to raise money through sponsorship to support the work of UNICEF in crisis-torn Darfur, where 3.4 million people have been affected by ethnic and political conflict.

Van, who was born in the rainforests of Borneo but was schooled in Yorkshire, says: "Darfur has been described as the biggest humanitarian crisis to hit the world in the past century. It had lots of publicity when the news broke four years ago, but it was then followed by the tsunami in East Asia and has been forgotten by the media. The fact is that the situation is still no better."

He adds: "It's going to be tough for me to swim the Channel. But I enjoy a challenge. I wanted to do something that wasn't selfishly motivated and I like the idea of doing something for someone that you don't know but who, through your help, may have a new hut or better sanitation in six months."

With the help of the Channel Swimming Association and Brighton Swimming Club, Van has organised his own training programme and commissioned an escort boat and skipper to accompany him on the crossing, which will be between 6 and 12 August, depending on the weather. He anticipates the swim will take him about 13 hours.

In the meantime, he is training for three hours three times a week and bulking his weight from 11.5 stone to 13 stone to cope with the physical strain of swimming in water less than 18 degrees Celsius.

Legal challenge: Van Ferguson is preparing to swim the Channel for charity.

"It's a mental test, too, to keep going for so long," adds Van. "I've learned how to do a special kind of breathing from the navel and then to just switch off my mind."

If his August attempt is successful, Van hopes to set up an annual University of Sussex relay swim across the Channel.

Book shows how to be a good student landlord

Landlords who want to let properties to students could pick up a few professional tips from the University's Housing Services Manager - she's just had a book published on the subject.

The Landlord's Guide to Student Letting is aimed at people who want to invest in properties for student tenants.

Catherine Bancroft-Rimmer runs the Housing Office and advises on student accommodation on the local private-rented sector. She represents the University on the Brighton & Hove Strategic Housing Partnership, so she has a good overview of local housing issues and the impact of student housing on an area.

Catherine is also a landlord to student tenants. She is a member of the National Federation of Residential Landlords (NFRL) and currently chairs the Brighton & Hove branch of the NFRL.

She says: "In the book I take landlords through the process of selecting and managing properties for student occupation. I believe that a professional attitude to letting will result in happier tenants and happier communities as well as happier landlords."

She adds: "The market and the legislation are constantly changing and it is ever more important that you ensure you are operating within the law and keep up to date with how you can best market your investment."

Catherine also offers five top tips for landlords who want to keep their tenants and local neighbourhoods happy:

- Make sure that tenants know that an unreasonable amount of noise is a breach of their tenancy agreement and can result in hefty fines from the local council if neighbours complain.
- Make sure that gardens in student properties are well maintained and either employ a gardener or give the tenants the appropriate equipment to keep grass and shrubbery under control. Front gardens, in particular, affect the look of the area.
- Give your tenants a 'house pack' when they move in, full of useful information about the local area, and ensure they know what days they should put out their rubbish and recycling.
- Check your property regularly and ensure it is well maintained. Dripping overflow pipes and blocked gutters can affect neighbouring properties as well as your own.
- Ensure that the neighbours either side of your property have your contact details. Not only will this help them if your tenants are causing problems, but it will encourage them to inform you if tenants are not treating your property well.
Young businessman from Sussex wins top award

A businessman based at the Innovation Centre on campus is celebrating after making it to the top five young entrepreneurs in Europe following a competition run by BusinessWeek.

Raj Anand (left) set up his company, kwiqq.com, at the Innovation Centre after graduating from Sussex. Kwiqq’s web-based software creates online social networks tailored to the specific needs of a company’s customers or user base.

It was down to visitors of the website www.businessweek.com to vote on who they thought should be Europe’s Young Entrepreneur 2007.

On 18 July, Raj discovered that he and four others have all been awarded the top accolade after a very close vote.

He said: “Finding out this was absolutely fabulous. It’s great at this early stage of my career and the publicity for my business is priceless.

“In just six months we at Kwiqq have proved that we have a social networking product which is top of its league and a capable, driven team.

“Having built the software we have total control and can provide customised products for our clients. More than that we maintain warm relations with our clients.”

He added: “It should also hopefully benefit organisations and people I work closely with such as First Choice, Sussex Innovation Centre, CDEC and the University who I thank for their help.”

For more information on Raj’s business, go to www.kwiqq.com.

Posters at platform 16 promote Sussex research

Sussex research is being showcased this month on a series of advertising posters at Victoria railway station.

Under the slogan ‘Because of us ...’, the University has produced a selection of striking images in various media highlighting the wealth of research carried out at Sussex.

The material was produced to coincide with a research dinner held at the end of June and for future profile-raising research engagements.

A report and a series of postcards highlight the contribution made by Sussex researchers, with examples of life-changing research drawn from across the arts and sciences.

As part of the preparation for the research dinner, the University updated and improved the presentation of research information online. The Sussex homepage now carries a banner and imagery linking through to more detailed research information.

And in a first for the University, the theme has been extended to a focused advertising series throughout July at Victoria train station.

Other comments on the posters were: “The University looks like it would be slick and professional, going by the poster”; “It won’t change my perception of Sussex, but it’s a nice-looking poster”; “I feel I know a bit more about the University”; and “They stand out from most of the other adverts”.

Professor Bob Allison, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (research), had the idea for the ‘Because of us ...’ campaign, including the poster advertising.

He said: “The aim of this campaign is to raise the profile of Sussex research and demonstrate its overall contribution to society.

“By using these simplified images with a striking slogan attached, we want to make sure the world knows we have world-class research to be proud of.”

He added: “It’s really helpful to get feedback on the material, including the poster adverts, so that when we do this again next year we can make the campaign even more effective.”

During a morning at Victoria, our reporter asked ten rail passengers of varying ages their responses to the group of posters at platform 16 (where many Brighton trains terminate) and in an exit near the tube station.

People had mixed views. Most travellers agreed the posters caught their eye and said the images were quite strong, but only some had time to stop and read the stories in more detail.
Honorary degrees for eminent quartet

The University awarded honorary doctorates to four distinguished individuals at the graduation ceremonies last week.

**Philip Johnson-Laird** is the Stuart Professor of Psychology at Princeton University and the author of several renowned books on human reasoning and cognition. Professor Johnson-Laird was a visiting member of the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton in 1971. From 1973 until 1981 he was on the faculty at Sussex in the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology. He then moved to the Medical Research Council's Applied Psychology Unit in Cambridge and returned to Princeton in 1989.

His recent research has focussed on functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to examine the regions of the brain underlying deductive reasoning.

**Professor Georgina Mace**, Director of the Natural Environment Research Council's Centre for Population Biology at Imperial College, is a leading authority in conservation biology. Professor Mace began her academic career with a BSc in zoology, followed by a DPhil at Sussex on the evolutionary ecology of small mammals. She worked at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, at the University of Newcastle and at University College London before joining the Zoological Society of London, where from 2000 until 2006 she was Director of Science and Head of the Institute of Zoology.

**Sir Nicholas Stern** carried out the most comprehensive review ever on the economics of climate change. Published in October 2006, the influential review was commissioned by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Sir Nicholas is a former chief economist for the World Bank and for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Before 1994, Sir Nicholas' roles were mostly academic: he taught and researched at a number of institutions in the UK, USA, France, India and China. He has now returned to academia as a professor of at the London School of Economics.

His research and publications have focused on economic development and growth, economic theory, tax reform, public policy and the role of the state and economies in transition.

**Polly Toynbee** is regarded as one of Britain's foremost opinion makers. Currently the political and social commentator of the Guardian, and former social affairs editor of the BBC, she is also the author of several books.

Ms Toynbee, who lives in Lambeth, has a close association with Brighton and is chair of the Brighton Dome and Festival.

Party time for departing VC

Parting gift: More than 500 staff gathered at The Dome in Brighton on 16 July to say farewell to the retiring Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith. The Chancellor, Lord Attenborough, and the chair-elect of Council, Simon Fancashaw, look on as Alasdair unwraps one of his presents - a print of A Course at Sussex by artist Tom Phillips.
Sussex graduates celebrated at the summer graduation ceremonies at the Brighton Dome on Thursday 19 and Friday 20 July.

When Eugene Flood was called out of class with the news that his mother was seriously ill, he thought it was the end — for his mum and for his hopes of earning a degree and becoming a teacher.

Last week, Eugene graduated with a 2:1 degree in Media Practice and Theory (MPT) — in the presence of his family, including his proud mum, whom he made the subject of a moving photographic assignment for his final-year project.

Both Eugene’s parents are blind. His mother has also had to endure breast cancer and the devastating effects of diabetes, which resulted in two strokes in 2006 and kidney and heart failure early in 2007.

That latest illness meant that Eugene had to return to the family home in London to support the family, which includes a younger sister and twin 15-year-old brothers.

Financial support from the University allowed Eugene to commute to Falmer and complete his studies. His tutors in the Media and Film department were also able to support him by keeping in phone and email contact.

But the biggest challenge was choosing a subject for the all-important project that would feature in the final-year degree show. That was when Eugene hit on the idea of recording the experience of his mother’s illness. He took a series of intimate portraits using techniques such as vignetting, where the main subject of a photo is illuminated in darkness.

“I had no choice really but to focus on mum. I had no time to research anything else: the MPT course is really demanding, with lots of re-shooting and editing. It takes a lot of effort. Then I grasped that it would be important to record this experience. I was coming to the end of my degree, and my mum, potentially coming to the end of her life.

“I documented my mother’s treatment, hoping it would help me understand our volatile relationship. When I was a teenager I fell in with the wrong crowd and got kicked out of one school and was a bit of a tearaway. I wasn’t very nice to my mum.”

Eugene left school at 15 with just two GCSEs and ended up working for four years before completing an Access course. The MPT course was the first time he had picked up a camera.

He says: “Recording my mother’s experience allowed me to be a continuous support for her and it has undoubtedly strengthened our relationship. It was, however, very difficult to do."

“Both my parents are very happy for me,” he adds. “There’s been lots of ups and downs, but I got there in the end.”

From grade E to whoopee

A student who arrived at Sussex with grade E for her physics A level is leaving with a first in Physics and Astrophysics.

Sam Rason attributes the excellent result for her MPhys to the dedication of the Physics and Astronomy department.

“None of the courses would have been as enjoyable without the lecturers,” she says. “They were all very friendly and supportive and were passionate about teaching. It really brought the subject alive for me.”

Although Sam’s A level results did not meet the requirements for entry to the degree programme, she took a foundation year course to bring her skills up to the acceptable level.

“I’d always been interested in physics at school,” she says. “Although I didn’t do well in my A level, my teachers said that my love for the subject would see me through. And it has.”

In fact, the 23-year-old will continue with her studies by taking a PhD in geophysics at Royal Holloway, University of London.

“Although I enjoyed astrophysics, quantum mechanics, nuclear and particle physics, and studying general relativity, I’m really interested in using my skills to help model and predict geohazards, such as volcanic eruptions, which I hope will save people’s lives,” she says.

“I want to keep learning and hopefully people will benefit from my work.”
On track for success

Top disabled athlete David Stone combined his studies for a BA in Social Work And Social Care with being a world champion tricycle racer.

David, who will be defending his title at the Paralympic World Cycling Championships in Bordeaux in August, is on the long list for the British paralympics team in Beijing next year.

Throughout his undergraduate degree David, who has cerebral palsy, was supported by a University sports bursary and the help and guidance of the Sports Development Officer, Luke Terrill.

"Luke helped with the cross-over between sport and study, offering motivation and ensuring I was able to achieve in both," says David. "He also developed communications both between my tutor, staff within the department and the coach of the team to ensure I could manage my cycling commitments in the final year."

Cerebral palsy is a brain condition that affects movement and co-ordination. David, 26, began cycling as part of physiotherapy treatment to help improve his posture. The cycling soon became a passion, however, and he has been competing in national competitions since 1997.

He has also been supported by the government-backed Talented Athlete Support Scheme (TASS), a programme of funding and enhanced support to nurture future medal winners. David is now funded as a full-time athlete through UK Sport.

While David will focus on his sporting endeavours, he is hoping to use his degree to get a part-time job in the voluntary sector.

Dance highlights slavery

Choreographer and film-maker Rodriguez King-Dorset has been inspired by his academic studies to create a ballet based on a shameful episode in the history of slavery.

Rodriguez, who graduated last week with a DPhil in history, studied the influence of African dance on culture in the New World and Europe in the slave-trade era.

Using legal documents, court records, newspaper reports, diaries and paintings, prints and drawings from the period, Rodriguez also pieced together the lesser-known story of the black community in 17th, 18th and 19th-century London.

Rodriguez says: "I tried to show that African music and dance survived the horrors of the slave trade and the Atlantic crossing, and also that a substantial black community existed in London before the 20th century. This community used both European and African dance elements in the regular 'bails' it held in London, from which whites were excluded. This community used dance as a means of expressing both its sense of solidarity as an oppressed minority, and as a way of satirising the world in which it found itself."

Now a Senior Lecturer in Dance at Lincoln University, Rodriguez is also working with black dancers at the Birmingham Royal Ballet, choreographing a dance film project. The dance will be based on a scandalous episode in the history of slavery, when a black girl was flogged to death by a ship's captain for refusing to dance on deck for the crew.

Rodriguez studied drama, then dance, at the Guildhall School in London and the Ballet Rambert School. He became increasingly interested in choreography and African dance. Following a successful stint as a film-maker, Rodriguez decided to take things a step further and immerse himself in African dance history.

He says: "I felt that African dance, and the ways in which so much African music and dance survived the traumatic crossing of the Atlantic into slavery in the New World had been grossly underrated and misunderstood. That was the basis for my enrolling to study for a doctorate."

He studied for a masters degree before coming to Sussex, where he was guided by Professor Trevor Burnard.

Rodriguez says: "It was very hard to find someone with the specific expertise to supervise the research. Professor Burnard was always looking to see how he could help and encourage. I am very grateful for his guidance. If it was not for Sussex I would not be able to do what I'm doing now."
Obituaries

Bernard Pagel, Visiting Professor in the Astronomy Centre for more than 30 years, has died at the age of 77.

Bernard came to work at the Royal Greenwich Observatory (RGO), then at Herstmonceux Castle, in 1956. Together with other RGO staff members and University faculty, he helped in the establishment and running of the Sussex MSc in Astronomy, which recently celebrated its 40th anniversary.

Over the years, he supervised a series of Sussex graduate students in observational astronomy.

Bernard was a world leader in cosmical chemistry, especially in studies of the chemical evolution of galaxies. Just before his death, he completed the text of the second edition of his monograph Nucleosynthesis and Chemical Evolution of Galaxies. In 1990 he was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society and in 1992 he was elected to the Royal Society.

Planning approval for Falmer stadium

The prospect of a football stadium at Falmer moved a step closer this week (24 July) with the government’s decision to grant planning approval.

Brighton & Hove Albion FC must now secure the necessary £50m funding and tie up deals with landowners including Brighton & Hove City Council and the University of Brighton. This preparatory work could take between six and 12 months. The club hope to start construction work on site in autumn 2008, with the aim of playing at Falmer from the start of the 2010–11 season.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alasdair Smith, said: "We welcome the fact that a planning decision has finally been reached. We will be working closely with the football club and the city council, along with the University of Brighton, to ensure that the interests of our students and staff are best served as the project goes forward. The primary consideration continues to be the needs of Sussex students and staff."

The University is most directly concerned with issues in relation to the arrangements for transport management, not least because existing campus car parks would be made available, under carefully negotiated and managed terms.

If the stadium goes ahead a new access road to the University from the existing spur in Stanmer Park will provide a new entrance and exit to the campus, improving daily traffic flow for staff, students and visitors.

Both of these matters concerning transport – alongside many other issues – are formal conditions of the planning permission.

The University will also keep a close eye on developments to ensure that new elements are not proposed that alter the nature and character of the scheme.

There are therefore many issues that the University will be engaged on in discussion with the club and the local council. The Registrar & Secretary has established a small team to lead work, including staff from Estates, Student Services and Finance.

For background information, see www.sussex.ac.uk/falmerstadium.
LETTERS

Is the 84/86 bus being buried?

Chris Wadewy’s claim [Bulletin 13 July] that a survey of passenger numbers was conducted at the start of the autumn term contradicts an email he sent to me, when I complained about the cutting of these routes.

In that email he told me that the survey was in mid September, some time before term began, a point when by definition there would be fewer passengers.

This interesting choice of timing might usefully be compared with the timing of the decision to announce the services’ cancellation, which was made very late in the summer term after teaching had stopped, thereby minimising protests from student users of the buses, who may even now be blissfully unaware that their route to campus has been axed.

Both of these seem to point to a concerted determination to “bury” the services, a determination that is hard to reconcile with the University’s relentless rhetoric about its environmental commitments.

Andy Medhurst, Media & Film

Chris Wadewy, Transport Manager, replies:

No attempt has been made to “bury” the news about the withdrawal of the 84/86 bus service.

The timing of the survey of passengers by the bus company at the University’s request took place over a four-week period starting on 24 September 2006.

The survey period covered the arrivals week and the first weeks of term, which are often the busiest times for new student and staff bus travel to the campus.

Information about the withdrawal of the service was included in a Bulletin article (15 June), on the staff and student pages of the intranet and in an email sent in response to staff enquiries.

The service will not be stopping until 22 September, so all users should be aware by that point.

Reduce, reuse, recycle

Anyone lucky enough to have gained a parking space on East Slope over the last month cannot have failed to notice several large builder’s skips near the accommodation.

As a ‘skip-squirrel’ I of course nosed around them ... just how much non-waste does this university discard! Vast amounts of smashed-up furniture were piled high, with arm chairs stacked around the edge.

There are charity organisations such as Emmaus at Portsdown who work with people recovering from mental, drink- and drug-related illnesses; they renovate and re-sell all manner of furniture and they willingly collect.

I do not believe this university has a coherent ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’ policy, although it can organise a costly and not required re-branding.

Geoffrey Mead, CCE

Vicky Bowles, Building Manager in East Slope, replies:

Different organisations, including Emmaus at Portsdown, have made many wasted journeys in the past as the furniture is too old or too broken for their use; they will no longer call to East Slope.

Most of the furniture in East Slope has come from other accommodation areas or from schools’ “cast offs”. East Slope gratefully receives all contributions to replace furniture that is 30 plus years old and has been held together over the years by skilful handymen!

I can assure the ‘skip squirrel’ we do try to reduce, recycle and reuse.

Staff move to new grading structure and single pay spine

Just under 1,000 members of clerical, technical, manual and ancillary staff will be receiving letters by the end of this month setting out their position on the new pay and grading framework, and their July salaries will be paid at the new rate.

All three of the recognised trades unions on campus voted in June and July to accept the local Framework Agreement package. The overwhelming ‘yes’ vote from the UCU, announced on 11 July, completed the balloting process.

This follows more than 25 communication meetings on the Framework Agreement over the summer term with staff across campus, led by Human Resources with trades union colleagues.

Jane Summerville, Director of Human Resources, said: “This is excellent news for Sussex, for which I would like to express my thanks for the hard, detailed and determined work of all those involved in the negotiations.”

Once union members voted in favour of the package, colleagues in Human Resources and Payroll were able to start as planned the large-scale, phased process of moving staff on to the new grading structure and single pay spine.

Individual letters are now being sent to clerical, technical, manual and ancillary staff (except where any section of staff is notified otherwise) advising them of where they are being moved to on the new grading structure.

This means that July salaries for these staff will be paid at the new rate; payments of any back pay due will also be made.

The letter will also confirm other relevant changes – e.g. where the working week has reduced to 36.5 hours and new overtime arrangements come into effect, as a result of harmonisation.

Letters will then go to academic and academic-related staff in August as they move over to the new structure; they will receive any back pay due in September.

Human Resources are also planning to put through the nationally agreed pay rise of 3%, effective from 1 August 2007, on the August payroll.

Background information on the Framework Agreement is available at www.sussex.ac.uk/humanresources/framework

Staff can email framework@sussex.ac.uk with any questions or queries.
Sporty Sussex secure second place

Sussex staff and students came second in a closely fought sports competition this month.

The Temple Cup took place at Falmer Sports Complex on Wednesday 11 July and involved local teams competing in a variety of sports including rounders, netball and football.

Sussex competed against teams put up by ASB Law, Southern Water, United Utilities, Costain, MWH and Legal & General.

Ria Rottner, duty manager at the Falmer Sports Complex, organised the event. She said: "We have had another successful Temple Cup this year."

"Legal and General put up a good fight and, even without a team in the netball, they managed to take home the cup. Sussex followed closely behind in second place."

She added: "I'd like to say a big thank you to all the Sussex staff and companies that took part and we look forward to another successful event next year."

Runners up: The Sussex football team, who made it to the semi-finals of the Temple Cup.

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Revamp for fitness room

The main fitness room at the Falmer Sports Complex is to be refurbished in mid September, ready for the autumn term.

This means that from Monday 17 until Friday 24 September the fitness room will be closed as new gym equipment is installed.

The new gym will have a new layout, with state-of-the-art cardiovascular (CV) and resistance equipment split between two floors.

New CV kit will be installed including up to ten joggers, which will include integrated TV screens providing a number of both TV and music channels to choose from, as well as iPod compatibility.

In addition, a strength and conditioning room is being created in one of the squash courts. This will have Olympic bars and benches and a smith machine for weight training, as well as cable machines and a wide selection of dumbbells.

The updated facility will provide an all-round workout for every user, from the beginner to the elite athlete.

In addition to the fitness room at the Falmer Sports Complex, a small fitness facility is being set up at the Sportcentre. This will have around 25 pieces of the present CV and resistance equipment. Information about opening hours, which will be different to those for the main fitness room, will be available online from the beginning of September.

3D drawings of the new facilities will be available shortly online at www.sussex.ac.uk/sport and at the receptions at the Sportcentre and Falmer Sports Complex.

For more information contact Simon Tunley, Acting Head of Sport, on s.f.tunley@sussex.ac.uk.

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Small ads

Wanted: Independent studio/1-bed accommodation within easy reach of Uni by public transport. For Visiting Research Fellow. Perf with wireless broadband. Max £500 pcm. 6 mths Sep 07–Feb 08 incl. Contact Jenny Money, E jemms@sussex.ac.uk or ext 7778.


For sale: VW Golf GTI. £200. H reg. 6 mths tax & MoT. John T 515575, E maff65@sussex.ac.uk.

Wanted: Cute kitten in Sep. Contact Bente on ext 3038 or E b.k.bjornholt@sussex.ac.uk.

To let: Single room in home of young family off Lewes Rd. £390 pcm incl. N/S. T 021889.

Wanted: German grammar coach for BA German student. T 01903 217760.

To let: Room overlooking garden, Preston Pl area. Share modern kitchen, breakfast room, lounge, garden, etc. with owners. Quiet, N/S household. £345 pcm (incl bills & broadband). T 382048, E nick.jagger@employment-studies.co.uk.

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The Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and Lisa Merry, with contributions from Jacqui Bealing, Maggie Clune and Rob Head. 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 7 September, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 31 August. Please contact the Press & Communications Office in Sussex House, ext. 8888 or email bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.