Sussex ecologist to deliver Royal Institution’s Christmas Lectures

University of Sussex ecologist Professor Sue Hartley has been chosen to give this year’s prestigious Royal Institution Christmas Lectures.

The lectures, which began with Michael Faraday in 1825 and are aimed at a junior audience, will be broadcast on More 4 during Christmas week.

Professor Hartley’s five lectures will explore the ingenious weapons that have emerged in the evolutionary “arms race” between plants and animals for the past 300 million years. Using a variety of strange and wonderful species to illustrate her themes, she will talk about plant poisons, how animals use plants for their own defences and new environmental threats to our green world.

She says: “I am delighted to be offered the opportunity to deliver the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures this year.

“With all the environmental challenges we face at the moment, there has never been a more important time to encourage young people to get involved in science and I feel privileged to be contributing to that process.”

Previous eminent scientists to have delivered the lectures include James Dewar, David Attenborough and Richard Dawkins. Professor Hartley is only the fourth woman to be given the honour.

Director of the Royal Institution, Baroness Susan Greenfield, was the first woman to give the lectures. She says: “I am happy that we have such a charismatic and engaging lecturer delivering on a topic of immediate interest to so many people.”

In congratulating Professor Hartley, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Farthing, says: “I am sure that viewers of this year’s Christmas Lectures will be captivated by Professor Hartley. She has that special gift of being able to deliver sound science in an entertaining and accessible way.

“This is a great honour for her and for the University of Sussex.”

Professor Hartley is a world-leading authority on how plants and herbivores interact. She has served as vice-president of the British Ecological Society (2004-07) and has advised the government and European Union on environmental issues.

She has also worked extensively with schools and young people in promoting the public understanding of science, and is one of four University of Sussex lecturers taking part in an Art of Science event for this year’s Adur Arts Festival (3-21 June).

Sussex renews agreement with Study Group

The University of Sussex has renewed its agreement with education provider Study Group to manage the International Study Centre (ISC) on campus.

ISCs are designed to help international students acculturate to the UK, equipping them with the necessary skill-sets for undergraduate or postgraduate study and offering them an assured path onto an undergraduate degree or masters programme.

ISC students at Sussex benefit from access to campus facilities while studying for their foundation or pre-masters courses, which combine academic modules, study skills and English-language training and are validated by the University. See www.studygroup.com/isc/sussex/

The Sussex ISC has more than doubled in size since it opened, growing from 100 students in 2006 to just over 250 in 2008, drawn from 30 countries.

A new School of Business, Management and Economics at Sussex, set to open in August, will increase the formal provision of business courses available to its students. Business is the most popular undergraduate course with ISC students and Study Group is planning the future expansion of the ISC in order to cater for the expected rise in demand.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Farthing, said: “The International Study Centre has proved to be extremely successful since the project’s inception in 2006.

“We are reassured by the knowledge that the students attending the ISC are academically motivated and have a real desire to progress and excel. International students add a fantastic cultural dimension to the University environment and really fit in well to university life because of their time spent in the Centre.

“We are looking forward to the next phase of our partnership with Study Group.”

Heith Mackay-Cruise, chief executive of Study Group, commented: “Sussex has an outstanding reputation and delivers an academic experience of the highest calibre, making the Sussex ISC hugely popular.”

The biggest intake of international students into Study Group’s UK programmes is from countries with emerging economies such as China and in south-east Asia, and in particular from oil-rich nations including Russia and parts of the Middle East.

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BOOKMARK

Andrew Chitty (Lecturer in Philosophy) and Martin McIvor (eds)
Karl Marx and Contemporary Philosophy
Palgrave Macmillan, £20 (hardback)
ISBN: 9780230222373

The publisher says: "This collection of articles brings together the latest work of some of the world's leading Marxist philosophers, along with that of a new generation of young researchers. Based upon work presented at meetings of the recently founded and fast-growing Marx and Philosophy Society, it offers a unique snapshot of the best current scholarship on the philosophical aspects and implications of Marx's thought."

Ian Scoones and John Thompson (Follows in IDS) (eds)
Farmer First Revisited: Innovation for agricultural research and development
Practical Action Publishing, £13.99 (paperback)
ISBN: 9781853396823

The publisher says: "Farmer First Revisited returns to the debates about farmer participation in agricultural R & D and looks to the future. With over 60 contributions from across the world, the book presents a range of experiences that highlight the importance of going beyond a focus on the farm to a wider innovation system, including market interactions as well as the wider institutional and policy environment."

Susie Scott (Senior Lecturer in Sociology)
Making Sense of Everyday Life
Polity, £15 (hardback)
ISBN: 9780745642673

The publisher says: "This user-friendly book will appeal to undergraduate students across the social sciences, including the sociology of everyday life, the sociology of emotions, social psychology and cultural studies, and will reveal the fascinating significance of our everyday habits."

Donald Winch (Emeritus Professor of Intellectual History)
Wealth and Life: Essays on the intellectual history of political economy in Britain, 1848–1914
Cambridge University Press, £18.99 (paperback)
ISBN: 9780521715393

The publisher says: "Donald Winch is one of Britain's most distinguished historians of ideas, and Wealth and Life brings to fruition a long-standing interest in the history of those intellectual pursuits that have shaped the understanding of Britain as an industrial society and continue to influence cultural responses to the moral questions posed by economic life."

Hunter-gatherer excavation on the Sussex High Weald

English Heritage has granted permission to Dr Richard Carter from the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) and MA Archaeology student Karine Le Hégarat to excavate at a rock shelter site on the Sussex High Weald, an area of distinctive ridges and valleys between the North and South Downs.

A rock shelter is a shallow, cave-like opening at the base of a cliff. Rock shelters are often important archaeologically because they form natural shelters from the weather, prehistoric humans often used them as living places and left behind debris, tools and other artefacts.

The rock shelter on the Sussex High Weald is a Scheduled Monument within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and part of a private estate, meaning that Richard and Karine have had to obtain various permissions to allow an excavation.

Their excavation will contribute to the understanding of settlement and subsistence patterns of hunter-gatherers in Sussex during the Mesolithic era (between the end of the last Ice Age about 10,000 years ago and the beginning of farming about 6,000 years ago) – and more specifically the role of rock shelter sites.

The degree of group and individual mobility during the Mesolithic era has always been uncertain, with humans exploiting resources seasonally at different locations. The sandstone outcrops are highly visible and in a wooded environment may well have been markers where people gathered and returned to on a regular basis.

The project also hopes to recover evidence that will indicate the composition of the environment at the time and whether hunter-gatherers altered it in any way.

Finally, results from the excavation will better inform English Heritage as to the location of the archaeology in and around rock shelter sites, thereby affording better protection in the future.

The dig will take place at the end of June and throughout July.

Genetic boost for threatened natterjack toads

A population of Europe's noisiest amphibian, the increasingly rare natterjack toad, is to receive a genetic boost – thanks to work by the University of Sussex and Natural England.

Saltfleetby-Theddlethorpe Dunes National Nature Reserve (NNR) in Lincolnshire is home to a significant but isolated community of natterjack toads, which have fewer than 50 populations left in England.

Because of the poor genetic mix of the Lincolnshire population, its toads are not thriving. A project between the University of Sussex and Natural England has identified genetically compatible toads in Sandy, Bedfordshire – and spawn from this population is now to be brought to the reserve to give the population a boost.

Professor Trevor Beebee from Sussex said: "Natterjack toads at Sandy came originally from a site in Norfolk reasonably close to the Saltfleetby reserve. They have high genetic diversity, and we hope that this infusion of new blood will invigorate the Lincolnshire toad population so it will no longer need the artificial rearing of tadpoles every year to survive."

Natural England's Reserve Manager Simon Cooter explained: "We have constructed ponds, which are safe from predators, where the spawn will be able to mature. As they develop into young toads they will gradually disperse among the dunes and mate with the native population next year. We will repeat this process again in 2010."
Planning to increase income and cut costs

The University is going through the process of setting a budget for 2009–10. A paper on this was presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) on 11 June. An update paper will go to Senate on 26 June and a revised budget paper will be presented to Council on 3 July.

For 2009–10, the University’s budget already aims for significant increases in both fees from international students and income from research grants and contracts. At the same time, the University is facing known cost pressures that add up to over £5m for 2009–10.

Overall, having planned last year for a break-even position for 2009–10, the University at present forecasts a deficit position of over £3m. Latest mid-range forecasts show this deficit position getting worse in later years – increasing to £3.5m in 2010–11, and then £5m in 2011–12.

The Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group have recommended, and Strategy and Resources Committee have agreed, that a budget for 2009–10 cannot be approved on this current basis.

To enable a budget to be set, SRC have set out three principles for setting a budget:

- First, the University should continue to plan for growth as one part of the way of addressing its underlying position.
- Second, cost reductions will need to be made through looking at specific targeted areas.
- Third, the University will continue to invest in capital development to support strategic growth and development of Sussex.

The University’s plans set aside £1m for investments in 2009–10 designed to drive growth, and more in future years as growth delivers income. In looking at investments in new posts and growing areas of activity, the University will plan on the basis of proposals coming forward from the new schools in areas that provide the greatest opportunities for growth.

In relation to cost reductions, the initial areas that the University will focus on will be within those schools that have the largest individual deficits. But all areas will need to focus on balancing their budgets.

This process does not just apply to academic areas. The Registrar and Secretary, Dr Philip Harvey, said: “Professional Services will need to be focussed on meeting the core needs of the academic mission within constrained resources, and campus trading services will need to plan to cover their full economic cost.”

An updated paper is being presented to Senate on 26 June for discussion. A revised budget will be presented to Council on 3 July, and work will then continue in light of Senate and Council discussion.

A longer version of this is article is available online and the full Strategy and Resources Committee paper is available on Sussex Direct.

Addressing our financial pressures

In challenging financial times, the University needs to continue its path of strategic growth and development, address the significant costs we face and work together for continued future success.

We can see from the stories in today’s Bulletin how much positive activity there is at Sussex, from prize-winning staff and students, to programmes that attract high-quality students, successful academic partnerships, and new facilities that improve the staff and student experience on campus.

However, like all universities in the current climate, Sussex faces severe financial pressures over the years ahead. The cost of running the University continues to rise, while the public funding that we receive for 2009–10 and later years for our research and teaching activity will remain static or fall.

And the prospects for public funding are not positive, with forecasts of continued falls in the coming years. With Sussex more dependent on public funding than otherwise comparable universities, this makes the position particularly challenging.

In facing this, we are reaffirming that our strategic approach continues to be as set out in Making the Future: seeking to grow our research and teaching income, and through engagement with business and the community.

We will continue to invest in developing the University to sustain future growth. University plans already set aside £1m for investments designed to do this – and more in future years as growth delivers income. The University should therefore invest in a number of strategic areas that provide the greatest opportunities for growth.

However, we are not prepared to set a ‘deficit budget’ – i.e. simply to plan to spend more money than we earn – and take no further action to address the position. That would be unsustainable, quickly removing reserves and placing the University at severe risk.

Additional work is therefore needed to address both income growth and cost reductions before a budget can be set. In relation this, we are not proposing simply to reduce all costs across the board by 10%; that would be a recipe for decline, weakening successful and less successful areas alike. Strategy and Resources Committee were very clear on this point.

While all academic areas will need to ensure they balance their budgets, we will need to focus initially on those schools that have the largest individual deficits.

We will need to look at what a sustainable academic shape will be. As befits a research-led university, the main drivers in determining academic shape will be research excellence and generation of research income, as well as ability to generate income from student programmes.

Even those areas with budgets closer to balance will need to continue to work hard to deliver the planned increases in income from fees and from research activity. All schools will need to continue to find new ways of working, for example to simplify curriculum design and delivery, while sustaining and improving the student experience.

The papers going to Senate this month and to Council set out the scale and dimension of the challenge we face and the principles we propose. I think it is important to be open and honest with the University community as we start to take this work forward.

We are of course not alone at Sussex in facing these kind of issues. But by investing for growth, taking focussed action to remove costs and continuing to sustain the estate to support a successful university, we can together continue to create success for Sussex in years to come.
Dining out on research

University and V&A museum celebrate art of partnership

The full-colour brochure, aimed at external audiences such as funding councils, other universities and potential business partners, will be launched at the annual Research Dinner at the Royal Society in London on Monday (22 June).

This year’s research review features six projects:

- studies by Dr Grahame McAllister (Informatics) on human/computer interaction;
- Professor Judy Sebba (Education) investigating children’s rights;
- research by Professor Helen Smith (BMSI) into how writing can relieve asthma’s symptoms;
- Dr David Ockwell (Sussex Energy Group)’s work on the transfer of photovoltaic technology to India;
- Dr Claire Langhame observing love in the 21st century through the Mass Observation archive; and
- Professor Francis Ratnieks’ pioneering work on honeybees.

The research review’s featured subjects are aligned to the University’s six newly created research themes, which will also be launched at the dinner by Professor Bob Allinson, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research).

Tables at the dinner will be organised by research theme and will be hosted by Sussex academics.

The dinner gives representatives of organisations that have funded research, close friends of the University and supporters of its work an opportunity to meet colleagues at the coal face of world-leading research being carried out at Sussex.

This year’s speaker will be the chief executive of the Natural Environment Research Council, (NERC), Professor Alan Thorpe.

A 20-year creative collaboration between the Victoria and Albert Museum and art historians at the University of Sussex has been celebrated at a reception at the Museum in London.

The Exchange enables curators and academics to exchange skills and knowledge. A V&A curator comes to Sussex each year for part of the week to teach while a member of the Art History faculty goes to the Museum to curate an exhibition or permanent gallery display, write for museum publications, or use their expertise to devise a new online resource.

The exchange programme means that students can take courses based on collections and the curatorial expertise of one of the world’s most important museums. In recent years, students have studied contemporary photography, Indian art and 1960s fashion with V&A curators, while more than a dozen Sussex graduates have gone on to work with the V&A, and others are now working at the National Portrait Gallery, London and Charleston.

During the reception on 12 June, guests heard from Christopher Breward, Head of Research for the V&A, and from Maurice Howard, Professor of Art History at Sussex.

Christopher Breward said: “The Exchange programme is really a very simple idea, allowing the intellectual exchange of ideas for the price of a train ticket.”

“V&A curators travelling to Sussex have used their time there to explore Asian art, sculpture and fashion and culture. And there is no more testing an audience of new ideas than a group of Sussex final-year students.

"At the V&A, the British Galleries and Medieval and Renaissance and Modernist galleries have all benefited from Sussex expertise.”

Maurice said: “My time with the V&A has really taken really took my work forward in new and exciting ways. The Exchange scheme has also attracted attention from around the world, with museums in Los Angeles and Australia among those who want to find out how we do it.”

Guests at the reception were also invited to visit one of the V&A’s current exhibitions, ‘Baroque: Style in the Age of Magnificence’. The exhibition was curated by former University of Sussex art historian Professor Nigel Llewelyn, assisted by Art History research students Jane Eade and Elaine Tierney. Both students studied the V&A’s Baroque exhibits for their AHRC-funded collaborative research doctorates.

University of Sussex art historians who have conducted original research based on the Museum’s valuable collections include the following:

- Professor Maurice Howard has had close involvement with two major projects in recent years. He assisted on the preparation of the Gallery of European Ornament and co-authored a book on the subject. Later, he worked for four years as Senior Subject Specialist for the Tudor and Stuart sections of the £30 million British Galleries, which explore British design and applied arts from 1500 to 1900 and opened to great acclaim in 2001. This major project involved curatorship, writing text to support the museum’s publications and educational provision, and organising a major conference on the Tudor and Stuart interior.

- Professor Liz James carried out research into the V&A’s holdings of Byzantine material and curated an exhibition, ‘Perceptions of Byzantium’, within the Museum.

- Dr Meaghan Clarke, a 19th-century specialist, devised the online catalogue of the Victorian portrait photographer Frederick Hollyer in 2003-04; this was the second of a series of projects to bring the Museum’s photographic archive to a wider public.

- Professor David Alan Mellor has curated several V&A photographic exhibitions, the last in 2002-03. David’s long-established connections with the Museum date from as early as 1990, when he co-authored the book ‘Recording Britain’. Co-author and curator Gill Saunders, from the V&A, later came on the Sussex Exchange.

Recent Exchange Fellows at Sussex from the V&A include Gregory Irvine, Senior Curator in the Asian Department, and Zoe Whitey, Curator of Contemporary Programmes. Dr Flora Dennis came to join Art History at Sussex in 2007 following a spell at the V&A co-curating the exhibition ‘The Renaissance at Home’. She is now back at the V&A on the Exchange, planning new ventures.

Expertise: Maurice Howard, Professor of Art History at Sussex, has had close involvement with two major projects at the Victoria & Albert Museum.
Student car’s the star at va va vroom! launch event

Engineering students were lapping up the plaudits at the launch of their Formula Student racing car.

There’s been no time for a pit stop for any of the five drivers. Driver and Product Design student Anna Dugard (pictured) said: “It’s brilliant to be able to reveal the car to our families and sponsors. There’s been a lot of hard work and sleepless nights, especially in the last couple of days!”

Also attending the event on 10 June was world land speed record breaker and team patron Richard Noble OBE and Adrian Newey, Technical Director of Red Bull Racing.

The students have been working at full speed since last summer on their 2009 entry. Usually teams enter the non-racing elements of the competition in their first year, but the Sussex ‘petrol heads’ worked right through the summer to enable them to get a race-ready car by July 2009.

Now the team is looking forward to seeing how their car fares on the track against cars from over 80 universities worldwide at the 2009 Formula Student competition, at Silverstone from Thursday 16–Sunday 19 July.

Anna said: “I just want to get to Silverstone now to show the other teams what Sussex can do!”

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paul Layzell, said: “What this team has achieved is remarkable. University of Sussex students enter Formula Student annually as part of the four-year Engineering degree but this is by far the best car we’ve ever had. We’re expecting great things at Silverstone!”

Features of Sussex’s entry include a Yamaha 600cc four-cylinder injection engine, restricted airflow 20mm, Mobil 1 oil, OTA fast engine management system, electronic paddle shift mechanism – just like a McLaren – and a Mobil 1 branded carbon-fibre shell.

This year’s principal sponsor is Exxon Mobil, who have contributed not only funding but unprecedented levels of training and support to the team throughout the build.

Formula Student is run by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMEchE), with the assistance of the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE).

Record numbers at open day

The open day for potential undergraduate students on Saturday (13 June) attracted record numbers.

Students thinking about which university to apply to for September 2010 came along with family and friends to look around campus, meet academics, drop in on accommodation and take tours into Brighton.

In total over 4,000 booked on the event, making it the largest summer open day held at Sussex.

Daniella Salvage from Student Recruitment Services (SRS) organised the event. She was full of praise for the contribution of more than 160 academic and Professional Services staff and 60 student helpers: “My thanks go to everyone involved for all of the help and support that teams continually provide for these large-scale recruitment events, making them such a success each year.”

Feedback from students this year came from an online evaluation survey and initial results were very positive, with over 83% saying their visit made them more likely to apply to Sussex.

Individual comments were full of praise for the campus, the staff and the opportunity to study at Sussex. One prospective applicant said: “As soon as I walked into the campus I felt so at home! The tutors seemed to have passion and excellent knowledge of the course that I intend to do.”

This feedback from students chimes with the positive responses that SRS have been getting to Sussex at higher education fairs this year, and with the 26% increase in demand for the undergraduate prospectus compared to the same point last year.

Professor Joanne Wright, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), said: “It’s vital that we build on this positive start to 2010 recruitment; Sussex needs to re-grow its strong applicant base of high-quality and enthusiastic students.”

The autumn open day takes place on Saturday 10 October – and SRS look forward to 5,000 plus attending on that day.

CCE publishes creative writing anthology

The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) has published its latest fiction anthology, written by final-year students on the Certificate in Creative Writing and MA in Creative Writing and Authorship.

The Certificate in Creative Writing was first offered at the University of Sussex in 1994. Since then hundreds of writers have been given the opportunity to study and discuss the process of writing, and many have gone on to achieve publishing success.

Copies of the anthology (£5 each) are available from the Sussex Institute reception.
Obituary

Catering development programme to start

Mary Dove, Professor of English, died suddenly on Friday 5 June.

Born in 1944, Mary came to Sussex in 1995 as a Lecturer in English, was promoted to Reader in 2000 and Professor in 2008.

A distinguished medievalist, internationally recognised for her work on the history of Old Testament interpretation, she edited and translated the standard medieval Latin commentary, the Glossa Ordinaria, in the Song of Songs (1997) and published The First English Bible: The text and context of the Wycliffite Versions in 2007.

Mary was preparing a critical edition of medieval texts arguing for the translation of the Bible into English, for which she had been awarded a Leverhulme Research Fellowship for 2007–09.

She was a key member of the Sussex Centre for Early Modern Studies, but her interests ranged far beyond the middle ages and the early modern period. She was a dedicated, stimulating and wonderfully versatile teacher who was equally at home with the literature and thought of the 12th and the 20th centuries.

Mary also played a full part in developing the new English curriculum, chaired the exam boards of English and American Studies and served on various University committees.

She was a splendid, hard-working colleague, lively, unstuffy and very good company. It is desperately sad that she died at the very height of her powers as a scholar and with no chance to enjoy her approaching retirement.

Following a private family funeral on Wednesday (17 June), a service took place in the Meeting House on campus, to which all Mary’s friends and colleagues were invited.

Norman Vance, Professor of English

Work is planned this summer to create a brand-new café at the heart of campus and to refurbish a small number of existing cafés.

Construction work begins during the summer vacation at the south end of Arts A (where bike racks are currently located) to install glazing between the red-brick arches and create a contemporary café in keeping with the local architecture. This new outlet will open early in the autumn term.

Over the summer the cafés located in Chichester 1 and BSMS (Doctors’ Orders) both undergo a make-over to enhance the customer experience. They will be closed for a brief period from mid August to enable refurbishment work to take place, reopening for the new academic year.

This investment is part of the catering strategy approved by Council in June 2008 following a major review of the University’s catering and retail services in 2007, which included a consultative process involving over 600 students and a similar number of staff.

Based on the findings and recommendations of the review, Catering Services have been developing catering provision – with greater choice and a broader range of food provision (including healthier options); increased sustainability through supporting local suppliers; and the introduction of biodegradable packaging.

Recognition of the positive changes has been forthcoming from both students and staff, and also acknowledged externally with the presentation of a Good Egg Award from Compassion in World Farming.

The initial phase of capital works this summer is part of a major investment of £10m over the next two years. The catering plan consolidates the number of outlets, with fewer but larger cafes spread across the campus, in the optimum locations for different groups of staff and students.

In addition to improvements in the location and design of campus cafes, a major feature of the project is the modernisation of Bramber House, comprising the remodelling and refurbishment of both the ground and first floors and the installation of a new central kitchen.

The main aim of this investment is to enhance the experience of all customers on campus, including students, staff and visitors. Another key objective is to support Catering Services in continuing to deliver a financial surplus, ensuring reinvestment in the facilities in future years.

For details of campus cafes operated by Catering Services and their opening hours during the summer vacation, see www.sussex.ac.uk/catering
Three Sussex graduates in new Cabinet

For the first time, three Sussex alumni are members of the Cabinet, following Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s reshuffle on 5 June.

Peter Hain, Hilary Benn and Ben Bradshaw, who all studied at Sussex, join 18 other ministers in being appointed to the top jobs in government.

Peter Hain MP, who was the first Sussex graduate to enter the Cabinet when he was made Secretary of State for Wales in 2002, returns to the same post after resigning in January 2008. He first rose to prominence as part of the anti-apartheid movement’s high-profile protest against the South African rugby tour in 1970. He completed an MPhil in Politics at Sussex in 1980. His younger son is also a Sussex graduate.

Hilary Benn MP graduated from Sussex in 1974 with a BA in Russian. He became the second Sussex graduate to enter the Cabinet when he was made Secretary of State at the Department for International Development in 2003. He became Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in June 2007 and will continue in this role in the current Cabinet.

Ben Bradshaw MP, who has been appointed to the role of Secretary of State for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, has become the latest Sussex graduate to be a Cabinet minister. One of the first openly gay MPs when elected in 1997, Mr Bradshaw graduated from Sussex in 1982 with a degree in German.

There are currently 10 Sussex graduates who are MPs. The others are Tony Baldry (Banbury), Roger Berry (Kingswood), Michael Fabricant (Lichfield), Andrew George (St Ives), David Lepper (Brighton Pavilion), Dan Norris (Wansdyke) and Martin Salter (Reading West).

History prize for book on dance in France

Margaret McGowan, former Professor of French, has won the 2008 Wolfson History Prize for her illustrated book on the role and status of dance in 18th-century French culture and society.

Margaret’s prize for Dance in the Renaissance: European fashion, French obsession, was awarded on 9 June and is worth £20,000.

The Wolfson History Prizes, established in 1972, are awarded annually by the Wolfson Foundation to promote and encourage excellence in the writing of history for the general public.

Previous University of Sussex winners include Professor Evelyn Welch in 2005 for Shopping in the Renaissance; Professor Mark Mazower in 2000 for The Balkans; Lord (Asa) Briggs in 1999; and Professor John Röhl in 1994 for The Kaiser and his Court: Wilhelm II and the government of Germany.

National award for campaigning ‘student unionist’

Sussex student Ellie Hopkins was named ‘Student Unionist of the Year’ in the annual NUS Awards, at a ceremony last week.

As part-time Ethical and Environmental Officer in the Students’ Union (USSU), final year Development Studies undergraduate Ellie has played a key role in a range of issues across campus.

Working alongside the University’s Energy and Environment Manager, Patrick Pica, she was the driving force behind the Eco-Uni campaign that helped to ensure that green issues form a key part of the University’s strategic long-term plan.

She also organised one of the first student climate change conferences on campus and, within the Union, helped introduce a new environmental policy, introduced a ‘no flights’ policy and new structures to help USSU continue to reduce its carbon footprint. She also worked to win a Silver Sound Impact Award, recognising USSU as one of the most ‘green’ unions in the country.

Ellie said she was “overwhelmed” with her win. She said: “I’ve always just followed what I believe in, what provides positive change, what matters and what I think needs fixing.

“I’ve loved every minute of my time in student campaigning and I’ve met some very special and inspirational people. I think these awards go to show how fantastic students are, how they are the key drivers in positive social and environmental change.”

Wes Streeting, President of NUS, paid tribute to Ellie, saying: “Ellie Hopkins beat off stiff competition to win the coveted student unionist of the year because of her outstanding commitment to campaigning on ethical and environmental issues.

“Her work, both locally and nationally on these issues, is proof that the dedication of one individual can go a long way to inspiring others to get involved to make a difference and that you don’t have to be a full time salaried officer in a students’ union to have an impact and be recognised.”

The winners were announced at a ceremony in London on 12 June. The finalists were selected from almost 200 nominations from over 60 students’ unions across the UK.

Biologist wins prestigious Charles Darwin Award

A research technician from Biology and Environmental Science was at the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) in Regent’s Park on Tuesday (16 June) to receive its Charles Darwin Award for “an outstanding zoological project carried out and written by an undergraduate” in 2008.

Jonathan Carnuthers won the £800 prize for his undergraduate project on cuckoo bumblebees, which he completed in his final year at the University of Sheffield.

Jon found that a chemical called dodecyl acetate – previously found in one cuckoo bumblebee species, which uses it to repel host workers while it invades their nest – is produced by a further two species.

The findings are going through a peer-review process and Jon hopes they will be published soon.

Members of the ZSL Awards Committee were unanimous in their decision that Jon’s project was the deserving winner.

Speaking before his trip to London, Jon said: “I’m thrilled to have won the prize, and looking forward to the ceremony.”

Dr Libby John, head of the Biology and Environmental Science department, said: “This is an extremely prestigious award, and it is great that Jon is pursuing his career here at Sussex in our social insect group.”
Academic events

MON 22 JUNE
4.30pm Music seminar: Thor Madunsson (Sussex), Digital music systems as epistemic tools. Julian Broughton and Anna Dumitriu (Sussex), Sounding the Site. Pevensey 1A01.

TUE 23 JUNE
2pm Cognitive Science seminar: Michael Morris (Sussex), Language and content. Pevensey 1A7.
6.30pm Professorial lecture: Jenny Bourn Taylor (Sussex), Talk-stoppers, conversation and Victorian fiction. BSMS lecture theatre. RSVP essential to events@sussex.ac.uk.

Staff sports afternoon

On Wednesday 1 July, the popular staff sports afternoon returns.
The format this year is mini tournaments in mixed rounders, men’s 6-a-side football, women’s 6-a-side football, mixed netball, pool and darts.
The event takes place from 2–5pm at the Falmer Sports Complex and all participating staff will be able to finish their working day at 2pm.
To enter a team, or as an individual, in this free event, email sussexsport@sussex.ac.uk.

Politics and revolution

Dr Richard Whatmore, Reader in Intellectual History, will chair the opening event of a ten-day celebration to mark the 200th anniversary of the death of radical intellectual Thomas Paine.
The Tom Paine Forum takes place on 4 July in Lewes, where Paine lived for many years and formed some of his basic political ideas.
It is being organized jointly by the Sussex Centre for Intellectual History and the Tom Paine Festival.
The event, with invited speakers and open discussion, takes place in Lewes Town Hall from 10am to 1.15pm and is free and open to all.

Annual golf championship

The University Golf Society is holding its annual championship at Cottesmore, near Crawley, on 29 June at 10am.
There will be two simultaneous competitions over 27 holes.
The cost for the day is £50 for students and £55 for others, including lunch and prizes.
Contact James Hirschfeld (japhi@sussex.ac.uk) by 23 June.

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The fortnightly Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and James Hainner. The next issue will be out on 3 July, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 26 June. We welcome any letters from staff and students of the University and can advise you on ways to tell people about your news or story ideas. Please contact us on ext. 8888 or email internalcomms@sussex.ac.uk.