Meeting of minds: how multiple disciplines are playing a vital role in neuroscience research/ Remembering Lord Attenborough: Sussex pays tribute/ Courting controversy: Catherine Mayer in conversation/ Torsten Reil: evolution of an entrepreneur/ Sussex people, alumni events, and memories of living on campus
Welcome to the 2015 issue of Falmer and our Making the Future campaign update.

Sussex has always been a university with an international outlook and this continues to be a key focus: we are forging new links with partner institutions and hosting events worldwide. These events are often facilitated and attended by supportive alumni, making an all-important link between our past and future. I am proud to say that in March we will hold our first graduation ceremony in Beijing – adding to the thousands of Sussex alumni worldwide.

With 96 per cent of our graduates in work or further study within six months of graduating, Sussex has a strong record in bridging the worlds of education, experience and employment. Thank you to all alumni who play a vital role in offering advice and opportunities to Sussex students and recent graduates.

And finally, I am delighted to let you know that the Making the Future campaign is currently on track to reach its £50 million target, in support of research and scholarships, by 2016. It is your help that continues to make all the difference.

Professor Michael Farthing
Vice-Chancellor
In August 2014, we were greatly saddened to learn that our former Chancellor, Lord Richard Attenborough, had passed away. For four decades, he had been one of the University’s most ardent and committed supporters.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Farthing, paid tribute to Lord Attenborough, saying: ‘He was a great man in all respects. We are so proud that among the many roles he played, one of them was as our Chancellor. We will remember him for his vitality and commitment in supporting the University, for his unshakeable belief in the value of education, and for his immense warmth and kindness.’

In 1947, Richard Attenborough clinched his acting breakthrough, as a young gangster in Brighton Rock. Following two prolific decades of acting, he launched his career as a director with a musical critique of the First World War, Oh! What a Lovely War, recruiting – with Vice-Chancellor Asa Briggs’ permission – students from Sussex as extras.

In 1969, Lord Attenborough became Patron of the newly established Gardner Arts Centre on campus and his son Michael arrived at Sussex to study English. From 1970 to 1978, he held the post of Pro-Chancellor at the University.

From 1998 to 2008, thousands of graduands crossed the stage to be congratulated by the Oscar-winning film director and actor who had the gift of making everyone feel specially honoured; staff and students alike noted the enthusiasm, warmth and humour that he brought to every graduation event.

After stepping down as Chancellor of the University of Sussex in 2008, Lord Attenborough continued to support the University in many ways: as Patron for the legacy programme; as an Honorary Professor of Film and as Life President of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies.

I have gained so much more than I could possibly give to the University and I am incapable of adequately voicing my gratitude. I will miss you all very much indeed

Lord Attenborough, on stepping down as Chancellor in 2008
Honours for Sussex alumni

In January, CEO of Standard Life Investments Keith Skeoch (Economics 1975) joined our winter graduates at the Brighton Dome to receive an honorary degree of Doctor of the University.

Keith started his career at the Government Economic Service and subsequently moved into the private sector where his roles have included Director of Economics and Strategy and then Managing Director of International Equities at HSBC Securities.

Following the global financial crisis, he worked with the UK government and various trade bodies, including the Association of British Insurers and the Financial Reporting Association, to draw up best-practice guidelines in stewardship and governance of financial institutions.

Rupert Bravery (Economics 1978), Emergency Preparedness and Response Advisor, ExxonMobil, and Marcus Hayes (Law 1984), Managing Director, Mason Hayes Solicitors, have been awarded fellowships for their exceptional contributions to the University.

Rupert has played a key role in supporting and mentoring the University’s Mobil 1 Team Sussex since 2008. Receiving his fellowship, Rupert said he was ‘honoured and humbled’ and described how proud he was of the engineering students’ achievements to date, remaining friends with many of them for years after graduation.

Marcus Hayes was the first in his family to go to university and having carved out a successful career in law, he went on to establish both the Mason Hayes Scholarships and the Mason Hayes Charitable Trust Work Placement Scheme which provide financial and personal development support to those who need it most.

Marcus has also visited the University on numerous occasions to provide mentoring, careers talks and most recently a commercial awareness seminar for law students.

Major supporter receives CBE

Congratulations to Michael Chowen, founder of Sussex Stationers and one of Sussex’s most generous supporters, who has been awarded a CBE in the New Year’s Honours list for his services to charity. A committed donor to many charities in the local community, he has supported a wide range of projects at the University and the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, ranging from a Chair in Oncology and research into dementia, to honey bee health and intellectual history.

On hearing the news of his award, he said: ‘It is an honour to receive this accolade for something that gives me so much pleasure. I feel privileged to be involved with the University of Sussex and the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, and to have been able to support world-leading research in areas that are close to my heart.’

New arts centre to launch on campus

The new Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts is poised for launch in Autumn 2015. Formerly the Gardner Arts Centre, the building has undergone an extensive refurbishment and will provide a fantastic new teaching and research facility, as well as being open to the public for theatrical performances. The new Centre is a fitting tribute to Lord Attenborough and his family’s involvement with both the University and the arts.
Preventing podo: our first steps

Podoconiosis (or podo) is a neglected tropical disease that affects three million people in Ethiopia alone, and yet most people have never heard of it. This non-infectious disease causes debilitating swelling in the legs and feet of its sufferers who become immobile, unable to work, and ostracised from society.

The University of Sussex, through the Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS), has been awarded a three-year grant from the BIG Lottery Fund’s International Communities programme to help fund the Preventing Podo Project. This aims to deliver much-needed prevention and treatment to sufferers who have never accessed care before, while also addressing the need for education within the community.

Sussex has now launched Preventing Podo, a fundraising appeal within its 50th anniversary Making the Future campaign, so that many more podoconiosis sufferers can be helped.

September 2014 saw the opening of the Sussex Africa Centre, a new research initiative that builds on the legacy of the School of AFRAS (African and Asian Studies). AFRAS, founded in 1964, was one of the UK’s foremost hubs of African and Asian scholarship and teaching.

The University’s business incubator, the Sussex Innovation Centre, is expanding to a new site at the One Croydon development, located next to East Croydon station. This marks the beginning of plans to extend the Sussex Innovation brand to multiple sites across the South East in order to work with a larger and more varied network of innovative growth businesses. The new site will boost partnerships with organisations based along the ‘M23 corridor’ and in London, significantly raising the University’s regional profile and creating more opportunities for research collaborations and graduate recruitment.

July 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of Sussex’s first graduation ceremony in 1964. Eight of the original 38 graduates took to the stage at summer graduation to celebrate the milestone with 3,000 new Sussex graduates.

Sussex has been ranked 21st ‘greenest’ university in the world in the Green Metric Ranking of World Universities for 2014 in recognition of our efforts towards campus sustainability and environmentally-friendly university management.

To find out more about this life-changing work and the Preventing Podo campaign, visit: www.sussex.ac.uk/preventingpodo
The results of the Government-commissioned Research Excellence Framework (REF) have been announced.

Sussex received outstanding scores for overall research quality in biosciences, English, history, media and film, and psychology – being placed in the UK’s top 15 in each of these areas of research. Sussex’s history research outputs were rated highest in the UK for quality, with English ranking 9th.

In The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2014-15, Sussex has been ranked 4th in the UK and 34th globally for research influence.

The Multicriteria Mapping (MCM) tool is a new web-app recently launched by Professor Andy Stirling, an academic within the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), in collaboration with the Sussex Innovation Centre and DabApps – a Brighton-based developer. MCM is an interactive, multicriteria appraisal method for exploring contrasting perspectives on strategic and policy issues, empowering people across the world to perform complex decision analysis.

University of Sussex spinout TribeHive has announced partnerships with several football clubs around the country, as well as an official tie-in with the Football League to use the latest scores and statistics provided by Opta. TribeHive’s app solves the problem of poor WiFi and phone signal during matches by creating a network between phones in the stadium.

Sussex scientists have been awarded £5.5 million to develop devices that could radically change how we measure time, navigate our world and solve seemingly impossible mathematical equations.

The grant, awarded to various projects within the University’s pioneering Atomic, Molecular and Optical Physics (AMO) research group, represents part of a £270 million UK government investment aimed at converting quantum physics research into commercial products.

Quantum technology is the applied field of quantum theory. It offers amazing possibilities for smaller and lighter devices with extraordinary precision and, as a consequence, promises revolutionary technological applications in computing, measurement, navigation, and security.

Professor Michael Davies, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, said: ‘This new research programme will consolidate the reputation of the University of Sussex as one of the world-leading centres for the development of ground-breaking quantum technologies.’

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Find out more at: www.sussex.ac.uk/amo
A dramatic discovery

An Elizabethan play rediscovered by a University of Sussex English professor was revived at the Natural History Museum in June as part of Universities Week 2014.

A Dialogue, which dramatises the fictional visit of a messenger from the Emperor of China to Queen Elizabeth I, was unearthed by Professor Matthew Dimmock in Oxford’s Bodleian Library. He adapted the ‘knock-about’ comedy for a modern audience and it was performed by Sussex drama students Cara Dawson, Francesca Croft and William Dalziel.

Professor Dimmock says: ‘The play was commissioned by Elizabeth’s chief minister Robert Cecil and was performed to her just once in 1602 to mark her visit to Cecil’s house in the Strand in London. It has lain neglected and unperformed ever since.

‘It was common practice for plays of this nature to be performed to Elizabeth to celebrate her grace, her learning, and her fame and reputation abroad. This was how her courtiers demonstrated their loyalty and affection for her. She was often depicted as a goddess.’

The aim of Universities Week is to inspire the public about the world-leading research taking place in our universities.

Three-person babies: exploring the risks

A newly-proposed IVF technique that would remove the chance of passing on an array of genetic diseases between mother and child could pose other hidden health dangers, according to a new study involving scientists at the University of Sussex.

Mitochondrial replacement (MR) therapy would effectively create a baby with DNA from three parents, removing the mother’s mutated DNA so that genetic problems are not passed on.

The technique involves modification of the embryo’s DNA. This means that the replacement genetic material will be passed on to the child and also to future generations down the female line.

Scientists at the University of Sheffield, the University of Sussex and Monash University have compiled evidence indicating MR can have knock-on effects.

University of Sussex evolutionary biologist Dr Ted Morrow says: ‘The mitochondria contains a tiny amount of genes – fewer than 40 compared with something like 20,000 in the nucleus of the cell. But what has not been fully explored yet is how these genes interact. The problem with using “healthy” mitochondria from a donor is that this new combination of DNA may end up being the wrong combination, with other problems emerging.’

In February 2015, as the result of a Commons vote, the UK became the first country in the world to allow mitochondrial replacement therapy.
Award-winning journalist and author Catherine Mayer (EURO 1978) began her writing career at The Economist, subsequently joining a number of magazines in increasingly senior editorial positions. She has worked at TIME magazine since 2004, and was made Editor at Large in 2012. She has just published her second book, Charles: The Heart of a King, a biography of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales.

Catherine Mayer

Interview by Tom Furnival-Adams (English 2005)
In what ways did your time at Sussex influence your life?
I come from a liberal American academic background and Sussex very much fitted in with that, while really broadening my horizons in terms of the subject matter. The possibility of studying languages to read texts in the original languages and to study those cultures was incredibly important for what I do now. I’ve never stopped using not only the language skills I picked up, but also that cultural understanding.

Somebody who died but was incredibly important in my life was the infamous student leader, Richard Flint (ENGAM 1977). He was a very close friend of mine for a long time. He was an amazing person for whom I still have all sorts of things to thank, not least a slightly unlikely addiction to science fiction.

The whole experience of campus radicalism was very formative. I’m sure if you transported me back to then, I might cringe at the teenage politics we were practicing in some ways. We did really believe in changing the world. I still do of course.

Your first book, Amortality, explores the concept of agelessness. Where did the word come from?
I coined the word ‘amortality’ to describe the trend to live agelessly in the sense that you can’t define what age people are by what they wear, what they consume, what stage of life they’re in, whether they’re having children. It’s about understanding the nature of social constructs and where a social construct ends and a scientific reality begins, which is something that people have become quite unhinged from. It’s also very autobiographical: I have two parents who are both miraculously unhinged.

Did you have a career plan in mind when you left university?
No. I actually can’t believe how lucky I’ve been in my life. I always wanted to write but I never set out to be a writer. I fell in love with somebody who lived in Germany when I was in my last year at Sussex and so I went to live there to be with that person, then ended up back here. After working in a stately home as the skivvy in an antiquarian books business, I decided to come to London without a job.

A friend of a friend told me about a job at The Economist, cash in hand, counting orders for their big red desk diaries. They gave me a job as a marketing executive and, while I was doing that, one of my colleagues there cut out an advert for an editorial assistant and left it on my golf-ball typewriter.

I ended up becoming a very junior writer on The Economist. I was one of very, very few non-public school people there, one of very few women. It was the first place I’d come across where people thought I wasn’t as good as they were. It was a total education. While I was there I had my first encounter with the upper classes, and it was where I first met Prince Charles.

How did your biography of Prince Charles come about?
He invited himself to lunch at The Economist to talk about how he might use his position. I was much too junior to be included at the lunch but I met him as he came round the offices.

By the time I came to work at TIME magazine, I had had much more time around the Royals and gotten to know much more about them. As an editor, doing liaison on the big cover story for the Queen’s 80th birthday, I spent a lot of time behind the scenes observing her and talking to people and always asking for a sit-down with Prince Charles. Finally, in 2013, he got interested enough in the idea to meet me on the margins of an event and then I spent about six months trailing around after him. Eventually, I sat down and recorded a conversation with him and wrote a cover story for TIME. After that I did six months of research and spoke to many more of his inner circle.

Describe your relationship with Charles.
He didn’t choose me. The biography is not authorised and I wasn’t working ‘with’ him. I think the best way of putting it is that he did not stand in my way when I wanted to talk to his friends. I have no doubt that, by the time this interview comes out, Clarence House will have vigorously distanced itself from one thing or another in the book. If you’re going to write something balanced, you can’t possibly produce something that everyone’s going to be happy with.
Meeting of minds

Professors Michael Morris (left) and Leon Lagnado discuss the latest developments in neuroscience
Professor Leon Lagnado, Director of Sussex Neuroscience, met up with Professor of Philosophy Michael Morris to discuss the latest trends in neuroscience, and why multiple disciplines have a vital role to play in understanding the brain.

Michael Morris: Neuroscience has been very fashionable for some time. To begin with, can you tell us what it actually is?

Leon Lagnado: I think it is different things to different people. For many people, neuroscience is about the brain, as the source of who we are and how we think and how we feel and how we see, how we communicate. But people like myself for instance, we’re more interested in the nitty-gritty of how the machines inside our brain work.

MM: It is really interesting how all those different things seem to go together, and that you can’t say what neuroscience is without mentioning the different approaches and the different kinds of interest that might be involved in it. So it’s essentially multi-disciplinary.

LL: I have worked in the lab with people who’ve had trainings in mathematics, physics, biochemistry and psychology. If I’m at a party and people ask what I do and I say, ‘I’m a neuroscientist,’ I rarely get a muted reaction. Ultimately, neuroscience is about linking behaviour to anatomy to function to molecules.

MM: What recent trends have there been in neuroscience?

LL: The enormous development in the last couple of decades is our increasing effort to understand neurodegeneration. With so many folk living to a greater age, neurodegeneration affects not just the individual, but also their families and society in general.

MM: Are there new research tools and developments that make it possible to find out what’s going on in these cases?

LL: I would say there are three major areas in which the impetus to study neurodegenerations have come from. One is breakthroughs in understanding of the pathology. We know, for instance, that Alzheimer’s disease is caused by deposition of particular proteins. We have identified what we think is probably one of the key cellular processes that leads to the neurodegeneration.

Another key change is our ability to get at least some gross measurements of our brain activity in awake humans by functional MRI, magnetic resonance imaging. We can now correlate activities in different parts of the brain with different cognitive processes and we can ask how these processes go wrong in Alzheimer’s. The third major impetus is simply our appreciation of the economic effects [of Alzheimer’s].

MM: You see the problems with Alzheimer’s and other clinical aspects of neuroscience, and its importance is very clear. Quite a lot of people think there are answers to human life coming out of neuroscience. Do you think that yourself? Do you think we’ll get any deep understanding of human nature from it?

LL: It depends what mood you catch me in. My mother has dementia, I’ve seen pictures of her brain, and lots of it is completely shrunken. But she’s still essentially my mum. I do wonder why, even though so much of her brain is not functioning properly, there is still something which is still essentially her, about her character, the way she reacts to things. I think there is something fundamental to understand here. There are still essential qualities of a person with a damaged brain that remain. Where do these qualities reside?

MM: That’s interesting, because what it suggests is that even when you understand more about the kinds of things that various sorts of intellectual, cognitive and emotional activity depend upon – even then when you see lots of these failing, there is something else that you want to say is continuous with a person’s character. What’s interesting about that is it shows both the depth of what neuroscience can achieve, and also in a sense its limitations.

MM: What excites you about neuroscience?

LL: I like the feeling of perhaps seeing something for the first time. I got turned on to neuroscience as an undergraduate. We did a practical class where we recapitulated some experiments which revealed that basic mechanism by which neuron A sends a message to neuron B. I was completely bowled over by being able to directly see signals being transmitted across synapses. It was all about looking at a process which is normally hidden, with the right equipment, and that fed into my enjoyment of tinkering with equipment. I get a lot of pleasure from making microscopes which allow us to look into the brain.

If I’m at a party and people ask what I do and I say, ‘I’m a neuroscientist’ I rarely get a muted reaction.
Origins of neuroscience at Sussex

When the Neurobiology degree was set up in 1970, it was the first of its kind in the UK.

Launched in 2013, Sussex Neuroscience spans four schools of study and over 50 research groups; it is the epitome of interdisciplinarity. This blurring of boundaries has been at the core of the discipline since its very beginnings.

When Sussex began, in the 1960s, Biological Sciences was headed by the famous evolutionary biologist and geneticist John Maynard Smith. He worked closely with Stuart Sutherland, Head of Psychology, to recruit the highest calibre thinkers in both fields.

Richard Andrew was responsible for setting up the Neurobiology degree in 1970. Half of the modules were taught by biologists and ethologists, and half by experimental psychologists. The courses combined the research team’s expertise in sensory physiology and in behaviour, filling in the gaps between traditional disciplines.

“Our neurobiology degree programmes were never purely one discipline’, remembers Emeritus Professor Paul Benjamin. ‘They emerged through a continual debate: what should we teach the students?’

The neuroscience corridors of Sussex continue to be enriched by many emeritus professors who were part of the original team, a testament to the strength of the department’s ethos and to John Maynard Smith’s original vision.
Q&A

Professor Francis McGlone (Neurobiology 1970) shares how his time as one of seven students on the first neuroscience degree course influenced his ground-breaking work in the field of pain.

How did your experience at Sussex shape your future career in neuroscience research?
It moulded me. It just set everything in my mind. I didn’t realise until later the opportunity that that degree course had provided me with, because I knew no different, but as I moved through my career as a neuroscientist I became more aware that I’d been contaminated by the way those guys taught me.

It was a very global view, using comparative physiology, looking at a snail brain, looking at a bee’s activity. Mike Land looking at the functioning of a spider’s eye. Right the way through to the more physiological psychology we did in Stuart Sutherland’s department. It was a really eclectic way of looking at the brain.

It really got reinforced when I worked at Liverpool University’s Pain Research Institute, because pain research requires exactly that same type of multidisciplinary approach.

What were the lectures and the seminars like at Sussex?
Coming back into academia in 2010 after spending 15 years in industry, I’m somewhat amazed to find so much pandering goes on for the modern day student. I am required to put all my lecture slides online before a lecture, which some students refer to instead of attending – as if the slides are somehow indicative of what I am talking about.

There was obviously none of that ‘help’; it was done on a real blackboard, you were lucky if you got any hand-outs. So you paid attention. You had to write everything that you could possibly get down during a lecture. It was a far more visceral approach to learning, and of course there wasn’t the ready access to things like Google, so it was a very different world.

What are your thoughts on the growth of neuroscience over the years?
You’re asking a fundamentalist. I think it’s the future. The understanding of the human brain, it sounds a bit pompous really, but it is the last frontier. Forget the Higgs boson – there’s far more complexity going on in the brain. We really know so little about that. I think it was Kandel the other day who was saying it will be 100 years before we have a real – what he considers – fuller understanding of the human brain.

I think it’s an absolute travesty and a tragedy that more research funding is not put into neuroscience, particularly as it’s going to be the damnation of many of us, given this increase in mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s and all the other terrifying neurological conditions. It’s going to cripple us, I’m afraid, in terms of the amount of cost that those conditions are going to take.

The impact on relationships, communities and society when the brain goes wrong is devastating – from depression to extreme psychoses – and it is only by investing in more fundamental brain research that we will be able to understand and hopefully treat these conditions.

What interested you about focusing on pain in your research?
Because it was a wonderful community. In the pain research community you meet people that come from so many different backgrounds: neurosurgeons, anaesthetists, psychologists, cognitive psychologists, molecular biologists, neuroanatomists, social psychologists – pain research is a tremendous way to demonstrate what brain research should be, in that it is not a single discipline, it requires the skills and inputs from a broad range of scientists.

Working in pain research I could see that this simple little nerve fibre, the C nociceptor, was responsible for such chaos downstream when it went wrong. You get things like phantom limb pain, general myalgia, cancer pain, this is real human suffering. The urgency to try and find out what on earth goes wrong when a patient develops chronic pain – they’re quite often not responsive to opiates and very difficult to treat. As a basic scientist working with neurosurgeons and anaesthetists, you get the whole picture.

Francis McGlone

After completing his BSc, followed by a PhD, at Sussex in 1978, Francis McGlone took up a doctoral post at the University of Manchester before moving to the University of Liverpool in 1985 to work as a Senior Neuroscientist at the Pain Research Institute. In 1995 he joined Unilever R&D where he established a new science base: Cognitive Neuroscience. Returning to Liverpool in 2010, Francis took up his current post as Professor in Cognitive Neuroscience. His research focuses on somatosensation (touch) and affective cognitive neuroscience. He is also the Director of a neuro-consulting company, NeuroSci Ltd, working with industry to apply neuroscience theory to product development and use.

Francis has worked with chef Heston Blumenthal on a number of projects, most recently a Channel 4 programme exploring the connections between love, food and the brain.
Evolution of an entrepreneur

Phil Husbands, Research Professor of Artificial Intelligence, meets up with former student Torsten Reil (MSc EASY, 1999). Torsten co-founded leading games and technology company NaturalMotion in 2001.
You studied the Evolutionary and Adaptive Systems (EASY) MSc at Sussex. What was it that attracted you to the course?
When I was studying biology at Oxford I started some programming in Java. I did some basic simulations to do with population dynamics with altruistic genes. The whole idea of computational simulation was really interesting but I didn’t have enough knowledge of programming to do it properly. I also wanted to learn much more about evolutionary algorithms, artificial life, and complexity.

Do you have any favourite memories of studying at Sussex?
One of them was seeing John Maynard Smith give a lecture. That was a big moment for me. I remember it well because I happened to arrive at the lecture theatre at the same time as him and I held the door open for him. There he was: a bit scruffy with his dirty glasses and all that. I had read so much about him while at Oxford; naturally he gave a great talk.

I had a few happy eureka moments at Sussex where I suddenly realised that this stuff could actually work – genetic algorithms, neural networks, realistic simulations of bodies and things like that.

What is the greatest impact your Sussex experience has had in your life, either personally or professionally?
It was at Sussex where I learned that you could actually achieve things you wanted to do. I had a lot of ideas for simulations and I was able to do them and make them work which felt really good. This was in the dotcom days – I started thinking about commercialising my work, and because so much stuff worked for me at Sussex, it gave me the confidence to just do it.

My dissertation project on evolving bipedal walking was sponsored by a company, which fed into the whole idea of commercialisation, and that all put me on the path to the foundation of NaturalMotion.

The whole nature of the MSc was cutting edge (one of the guys on the course liked to talk of us as rock and roll scientists!) and that gave me a different view of science but also how it might be commercialised.

What are your thoughts on the future of the gaming industry?
Mobile is already the dominant form of gaming and that will continue to grow very fast, particularly in the Eastern markets. Production quality will continue to improve, the whole industry is much more data driven, allowing us to understand what customers want.

But in the future I think virtual reality is going to be big. Once high-quality mass-market headsets are out there it could take off very quickly, and various manufacturers are working on them now.

What are the biggest challenges involved in growing a technology company?
Getting your technology to be really reliable in a commercial setting is a big challenge. We had to crack that to get our technology into Grand Theft Auto, for instance. You don’t always know how your technology is going to be used and what the sweet spot is. In our case, our original approach of licensing our technology (in the games and film industries) worked and we still do that, but the real sweet spot turned out to be using the technology to produce our own games. So you have to remain open-minded and willing to change, without becoming unfocused. That’s a really big challenge for any technology company.

And of course as the company grows and the scale changes, you are now dealing with a completely different beast and you need to decide what kind of culture you want in the company and what values are important. That requires very different skills from building games and technology.

What is the best piece of advice you could give someone?
To persevere. Persevering doesn’t mean you will get there, but it is necessary to achieve anything. Not giving up and struggling through the difficult times and making things work is extremely fulfilling for the whole team and brings people closer.

Tell us about a turning point in your life.
My biggest turning point by far was reading The Blind Watch Maker and The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins. That was while I was in the army in Germany and I saw on the back that he taught at Oxford, so I naively applied to study biology at Oxford and was accepted. Before that I was going to study medicine in Germany. So everything changed. I came to the UK and that led to everything we’ve been talking about. It was Dawkins’ computer biomorphs, which he used to illustrate evolution, that initially got me interested in programming – I taught myself BASIC on an Atari ST to replicate them. So for me an awful lot came from those books.

Read the extended interview with Torsten at: www.sussex.ac.uk/falmerextra
Many moons ago
My memories of East Slope are being woken up in the morning by the lowing cows. The land was more open, just fields not trees. We liked to walk over to Stanmer Village.

Jennifer Webb-Fusaro (BIOLS 1975)
(pictured right)

Mud, glorious, mud
When Norwich House was brand new and the only hall that was finished, the campus was still under construction. It was so muddy that people used to leave their filthy shoes outside their rooms. In the evening the corridors looked like the halls of a grand hotel, with the shoes left out for cleaning. Except of course, no one to clean them.

Alan Markwick (MAPS 1964)

Global gathering
I lived on campus during my exchange year to England in 2011-12. Our friendship group included people from all over the world. Every Sunday we would get together to cook a meal from someone’s country and eat and laugh together. It was the best time and I considered them all like family. We kept in touch and are still close to this day.

Mamie Davis (Sociology 2011)
(pictured fourth from right)

As we prepare to say farewell to East Slope residences and hello to new, improved accommodation over the next two years, we’ve gathered some of our favourite tales of the joys of living in student housing.

Fit for a queen
The Queen visited us in the Norwich House Common Room, when she opened the Library. One bright spark spread his shiny black plastic donkey jacket Walter-Raleigh-like over a puddle between Falmer House and the Library as she passed.

Andrew Doubt (MAPS 1963)
Any old iron

All us early freshers were put up in Brighton guesthouses which catered for holidaymakers in the summer and were totally unsuitable for students in the winter. I shared a cold room in Rodney House with one single bar electric heater high up the wall and an electricity meter which needed constant feeding. Our landlady read us the riot act in the first week for hanging out in the street taking far too long to say goodnight to our new boyfriends. She didn't want her neighbours to think she was running a brothel, she said. She took her revenge on us by withholding our letters from home until we'd finished our breakfast.

What she didn't know is that you can cook on an upturned iron suspended in a wastepaper basket, so our room became a makeshift kitchen and the iron turned into a hob for everything from Fray Bentos steak pie to Vesta chicken curries. I'm sure that early experience of makeshift, rebellion and subterfuge at Rodney House was good training for us all.

Lesley Garner (EURO 1963)

Water aid

Soon after arriving in Lancaster House it was discovered that the fire hoses situated on each floor all operated automatically: pull them out, flick the switch and away you go. What followed were weeks of riotous and very wet nights of inter-floor warfare, resulting in a dressing down by the Warden and a hefty fine.

By happy chance Lancaster House that year also housed most members of one of the University house bands. The answer was clear: a sort of ‘Water Aid 1969’. The Warden – bless the good old Sussex liberal thinking – actually thought it a rather novel idea, and agreed. The result was one of the best Hall gigs of the year. Full to overflowing, riotous but not too much so, embracing all three Halls (Norwich, York and Lancaster). When all the litter and bodies had been cleared away, and all the fines duly paid over to the Warden, the organisers were still able to present him with a cheque for future Hall events!

Roger Martin (AFRAS 1966)

Furry flatmate

We were in the kitchen in our East Slope flat when we heard movements coming from the boiler cupboard, which was always locked shut to control the strict two-hour daily hot-water limit. We opened the door and a ferret ran out right past us, through the front door and off onto the slope. No idea how long it had been there and we never saw it again!

Nicola Jones (EURO 1992)

Dyeing for a drink

One night food colouring somehow found its way into the water tank in Norwich House. Can’t think how that happened.

Paul Montgomery (ENGG 1986)

Life of pie

In 1964 I arrived at Rodney House, home for the next year. We experienced all of the usual disasters: cooking a pie that was scalding outside but had ice crystals inside, forgetting the one red item in the first laundry wash such that everything would come out pink. We would drink tepid, weak coffee (instant coffee powder, powdered milk, and hot water from the tap) whilst discussing philosophy late into the night. It was known as drinking NesKafka.

Mo Foster (MAPS 1964)
(pictured second left, second row from the front)

Ready, sett, go!

I had a badger run over my foot once, at the very top of East Slope.

Paul Allison (SOC 1995)

Got a story about living in student digs that you’re dying to get off your chest? Email alumni@sussex.ac.uk and read more at: www.sussex.ac.uk/falmerextra
Sussex people

Find out what some of your fellow alumni have been up to in the past year and do get in touch if you’d like us to share your news.

1960s

Congratulations to **Mo Foster** (MAPS 1964), who received a 2014 BASCA gold badge in recognition of his outstanding contribution to British music.

Congratulations to **Professor Sir Julian Le Grand** (SOC 1964), who was awarded a knighthood for services to social science and public service in the 2015 New Year’s Honours list.

A second general election campaign beckons for **Malcolm Fincken** (CCS 1965), who will stand as the Labour Party’s parliamentary candidate for Braintree this year.

**David Hallam** (CCS 1967) continues his role as an interim communications director, most recently with a health NGO in Brussels, and is halfway through an MA at the University of Birmingham.

**Dr Andrew Doubt** (MAPS 1963) and his wife have completed the Camino Francés, backpacking 500 miles from St-Jean-Pied-de-Port to Santiago de Compostela.

**Professor Pramesh Kapoor** (SCITECH 1966) is the Honorary President of the Royal Society of Chemistry, North India Section.

**Annabel Gregory** (AFRAS 1968) and her husband have founded The Hedge Press, a small independent publishing company, whose publications have included a wartime diary by Dr Anthony Ryle, former head of the University’s Health Centre.

Congratulations to **Linda Seymour** (EURO 1973) and **Dave Feintuck** (MAPS 1969) on the birth of their first grandchild, William Gilles Buxton Feintuck.

1970s

Congratulations to **Dame Gail Rebuck** (EURO 1970), Chair of Penguin Random House UK, who was appointed to the House of Lords, as well as being named Chair and Pro-Provost of Council at the Royal College of Art.

**Wendy Cealey Harrison** (ARTS 1971) founded ABACISCUS, a new company specialising in handmade mosaic items.

History was made by **HH Judge John Tanzer** (ENGAM 1971), who appeared at Croydon Crown Court via Skype, in what is believed to be the first instance of a judge not being physically present in court to hear a verdict in a criminal case.

1980s

Dr Dan Gunn (ARTS 1981) edited The Cahiers Series, a collection of books aiming to make available new explorations in writing and translating, collaborating with John Tran (EURO 1983) on image sourcing.

Guy Scott (ARTS 1982) was appointed interim president of Zambia following the death of president Michael Sata.

The Mojet, an innovative new ventilation system designed by Fathi Tarada (SCITECH 1984), was installed in a number of tunnels in Norway.

Debbie Bond (BIOLS 1985) embarked on an extensive tour of the US throughout 2014 with her band, the TruDats.

Quicksands and Shadows, the latest album by Léanie Duncan (ENGAM 1989), was released under her stage name, Léanie Kaleido.

1990s

Joanna Hill (CCS 1993) was appointed as Chief Operations Officer at the Start Up Loans Company.

Congratulations to Lizzie Fincham (EDUC 1994), who was shortlisted for the 2014 Bridport Poetry Prize.

The newly-founded School of Law at Royal Holloway, University of London has appointed Dr Rosie Meek (Psychology 1997) as its Head.

Congratulations to Richard Moross (SOC 1997), CEO and founder of Moo.com, who was awarded an MBE in the 2015 New Year’s Honours list.

2000s

Brightminded, a Brighton-based software start-up founded by Dan Murray (Philosophy 1994), Cristiano Solarino (Informatics 2001) and Dan Cowan (COGS 1996), was shortlisted for the 2014 IBM Watson Mobile Developer Challenge.

Congratulations to comedienne Sara Pascoe (English 2001), winner of the 2014 Chortle Breakthrough Award.

Congratulations to Dr Carlos Gershenson (Informatics 2001) and colleagues, whose operating system for urban mobility won the €100,000 Audi Urban Future Award 2014.

Dr Rodriguez King-Dorset (American Studies DPhil 2004), researcher in African Performance and affiliate member at Cambridge University’s Centre of African Studies, wrote and narrated Black Shakespeare, a feature-length documentary on the first generation of black British theatre pioneers working on Shakespearean plays in London from the 1950s.


Congratulations to Linda McVeigh (CCE 2006), winner of the Brighton Prize 2014 for her short story Ordinary Man in Suit.

Jo Roberts (Anthropology 2006) was a non-fiction runner-up for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, and a finalist for the US National Jewish Book Awards, for her book Contested Land, Contested Memory: Israel’s Jews and Arabs and the Ghosts of Catastrophe (Dundurn 2013).

Congratulations to Bianca Miller (Business and Management 2007), who reached the final of BBC TV show The Apprentice.

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Caroline Dommen co-authored a series of children’s books about significant figures in the history of Geneva, the fourth and final of which, Madame de Staël, is due out in May 2015.

Loose Ends and Extras, the final instalment of a trilogy of books by historian, Bletchley Park code-breaker and former Vice-Chancellor of the University, Lord Asa Briggs, was published by Frontline Books. Palgrave Macmillan also published The Age of Asa, a collection of essays analysing the impact of Briggs’ work on numerous academic and cultural spheres.

Dancing with a Stranger, the debut collection of short stories by Pauline Plummer, née Hughes, was published by Red Squirrel Press in December 2014.

Frederick Toates’ book, How Sexual Desire Works: The Enigmatic Urge, which looks at the biological and psychological bases of sexual desire, was published by Cambridge University Press.

Peter Holloway’s book, HMS Wasp, which reflects on the opportunities that came to young working-class men as a result of National Service in the Royal Navy, was published in July 2014 by Book Guild Publishing.

Two books by Dr Andrew Spicer on cinema have recently been published: The Man Who Got Carter: Michael Klinger, Independent Production and British Cinema, 1960–1980 and an edited collection of essays, A Companion to Film Noir.

Reading the Gaelic Landscape by John Stuart-Murray, a comprehensive guide to the Highland landscape through place names, was published by Whittles Publishing.

Oxford University Press have published Jad Adams’ (CCS 1973) latest book, Women & the Vote: A World History, the first global history of how women got the vote.


2014 saw the publication of Steven Kay’s (MOLS 1983) debut novel, The Evergreen in Red and White, based on the true story of Rabbi Howell, the first Romani professional footballer.

Travel writer and journalist Alexandra Pratt (Politics and North American Studies 1992) drew on her experience of leading expeditions for her first fiction novel, Patriot, published under the pen name AS Bond, by Castle Books.

Dr Anne Beaumont revised her PhD thesis into a full-length book, Virtual Women: Ladyboys – changing sex in Thailand.

Dr Patrick Hicks (HUMS 1997) has had a busy year, publishing both his debut short story collection, The Collector of Names (Schaffner Press, Inc.), and his latest poetry collection, Adoptable, with Salmon Poetry.


University of Virginia Press published Dr Philip Kaisary’s (English 2002) analysis of revolution in Haiti: The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imaginations: Radical Horizons, Conservative Contraints.
2000s (continued)

Congratulations to Julian Sayarer’s (International Relations 2004) book, Life Cycles, a London bike courier’s account of his world record-breaking cycling trip around the world, was published by John Blake Publishing.

Congratulations to Kim Sears (English 2007), who has announced her engagement to Wimbledon champion Andy Murray.

Congratulations to Claire Le Cras (Physics and Astronomy 2008), recipient of the Institute of Physics Early Career Physics Communicator Award 2014 in recognition of her dance video explaining the life cycle of a star.

Social activist Amit Choubey (IDS 2009) was selected from a field of one hundred candidates to represent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as a 2014 parliamentary candidate in the Purvi Champaran constituency in Bihar state, India.

The debut book by Dominic Bliss (English 2003), Erbstein: the triumph and tragedy of football’s forgotten pioneer, exploring the life and legacy of influential football manager Ernest Erbstein, was published by Blizzard Books.

Matt Greene (English 2004) received a prestigious Betty Trask Award, which recognises first novels written by authors under the age of 35, for his child-narrated novel, Ostrich.

The Man Behind the Bow Tie: Arthur Porter on Business, Politics and Intrigue by Jeff Todd (English 2004) was published by Figure 1 Publishing.

Ross Montgomery (English 2005) followed up his Costa Prize-nominated debut children’s book Alex, the Dog and the Unopenable Door, with The Tornado Chasers, published by Faber and Faber.

Congratulations to Ross Montgomery (English 2005) who welcomed their first baby into the world in 2014 at their home on campus in Northfield residence. The couple met at Sussex and graduated together last July.

2010s

Congratulations to James Butcher (Politics 2010), who won a vote in May to become the youngest ever chairman of Lancing Parish Council at the age of 21.

Alice Jennison (Geography 2010) has been named by the 2 Degrees Network as one of the Top 25 Under-25s working in sustainable business in 2014, in recognition of her work as Environment Advisor and Community Investment Coordinator at Skanska UK.

Jeff Richards (English 2011) signed a three-book deal with TicketyBook Press under the pseudonym Jo Marryat with an advance of one gold sovereign to commemorate his great-great-great-grandfather, Captain Marryat, who, in 1833, vowed he would keep the first gold sovereign he earned from the book he was writing.

Congratulations to Alex Ryabchyn (SPRU 2012), who was elected as a member of Ukrainian parliament in October 2014.

Mavis Chan (Media Studies 2012) produced a viral video which led to her Burgess Hill-based friend tracking down his biological mother in Hong Kong after a 50-year search.

Congratulations to Jessica Collier (Physics and Astronomy 2009) and her partner Niall Fealty (Physics and Astronomy 2010), who welcomed their first baby into the world in 2014 at their home on campus in Northfield residence. The couple met at Sussex and graduated together last July.

Stay in touch

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Read more online at: www.sussex.ac.uk/falmerextra

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Prior to the Draper Lecture, alumni from the law profession turned out in force to network with current law students and faculty.

BBC Radio 4’s Sarah Montague chaired the debate on sustainable energy, featuring guest panellists Baroness Bryony Worthington; Paul Appelby, BP’s Head of Energy Economics; and Professors Andy Stirling and Jim Watson from SPRU.

Sam Wanamaker Playhouse

This unique event celebrated the new partnership for research, knowledge exchange and education between the University of Sussex and Globe Education.

Kuala Lumpur

Alumni and family members joined the Vice-Chancellor for an evening reception in Malaysia’s capital.

Perth, Australia

One of many alumni-organised gatherings around the world this year.

Sussex Conversations

BBC Radio 4’s Sarah Montague chaired the debate on sustainable energy, featuring guest panellists Baroness Bryony Worthington; Paul Appelby, BP’s Head of Energy Economics; and Professors Andy Stirling and Jim Watson from SPRU.
Over 40 alumni generously gave their time to network with students and talk about careers in seven different industry sectors, during Make it Happen fortnight.

Nobel prize winner Professor Sir Anthony Leggett and CNN reporter Becky Anderson (pictured with the Vice-Chancellor and Chairman of the American Friends, Jonathan Klein) were special guests at the New York alumni reception on Wall Street.

Professor Gordon Harold, inaugural Rudd Chair in Psychology (left, with Virginia and Andrew Rudd), gave the keynote talk at the San Francisco alumni event.

Watch these talks online at: www.sussex.ac.uk/falmerextra

Don’t miss out on next year’s events! Update your address and contact details in SussexSphere at: alumni.sussex.ac.uk