

c n t a c t



The magazine of the University of Dundee • February 09



Dundee biofuels expertise recognised

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from the principal...

The Principal's last column for Contact sends a clear message of "business as usual" and says a sincere thank you to the many people who make the University tick on a day to day basis...

When I first came to Dundee in the summer of 2000 I asked Marion Gatherer – who has been my excellent secretary ever since – about the rhythm of University life. "It's quite simple", she said, "when it's Christmas we think about graduation and when it's graduation we think about Christmas ...and the years roll by". She also told me – from her unparalleled experience of observing three previous Principals at close quarters – that there was no point in buying a season ticket for the RSNO because I would never have time to go to any of the concerts... and so, with one or two magical exceptions, it has proved.

The basic structure of the University year is somehow reassuring and more than compensates for other things undone – welcoming the freshers (the most frightening thing I have to do), Remembrance Sunday which has had such added poignancy in this area in recent years, the wonderful Carol Service, the Discovery Days, the Saturday evening lectures now in their 85th season, the sports awards and the annual graduation ceremonies in the Caird Hall now set alongside the excellent literary festival and with heroes – Seamus Heaney, John Sulston and Bonnie Dunbar – playing their part with style and dignity.

This is all part of the privilege of being Principal but of course the fundamentals of education and research continue apace. Even now Colin Palmer's work on the obesity gene moves us a step closer to the promise of personalised drug therapy; the new Centre for Freedom of Information in the Law School inspired by Alan Page and Janet McLean opens up the possibility of new areas of research in human rights, environmental decision making and legislation as it affects the governance of Scotland; and the Institute of Medical Science and Technology (IMSaT) is on fine grant winning form under the direction of Andreas Melzer with EU funding success in Nanoporation (ranked best out of 103 applications) and the interventional imaging (ranked 10th out of 3000 applications).

There is also huge excitement about the part that the University and SCRI will play in the new £27m BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Centre alongside the Universities of Cambridge, York and Nottingham and Rothamsted Research. This focuses on Claire Halpin's work on the development of 'second-generation' biofuels, those that do not impact on food production... here the promise of a more secure future for both energy provision and food production.

And so the University goes on and will go on from strength to strength into the future. It has been a wonderful experience to be part of this and I hope that I can take my Dundee insights on higher learning and research to the table at HEFCE.

Along the way I have been supported by many people – our inspiring Chancellors, Sir James Black and Lord Patel; wise and committed Chairs of Court, Larry Rolland and John Milligan and Court members who give freely of their time; Rev Dr Fiona Douglas whose work is often unseen but vital; the Vice Principals and other members of the Senior Management Team, especially the University Secretaries, Bob Seaton and David Duncan who kept me on the straight and narrow; the Deans and SASS Directors for all their hard work; three Rectors, all making their distinctive contributions and nine Student Presidents and Sports Association Presidents determined to make their mark on improving the student experience of Dundee. And, of course, Marion, Carol Pope, Neale Laker and Leanne Smith – 'the office' – also have my sincere thanks, not to forget the 'home' team – Elizabeth, Jenny, Graeme and Katherine who keep me grounded.

The University has also received tremendous support from the City, NHS Tayside, Scottish Enterprise, the Ninewells Cancer Campaign, Tenovus Tayside and many other local charitable trusts, friends and supporters, for which I extend my thanks. And of course I am all too aware that it is invidious to pick out individuals from a community of learning of 20,000 people, every one playing their part.

My final word of thanks is reserved for Professor David Boxer who leaves the University in March after 35 years to take up the post of Director at the BBRC-sponsored Institute of Food Research in Norwich. David has been a constant feature of the University for much of its independent life and he will be missed. As an active scientist, David had an international reputation in metal metabolism and microbial biochemistry and of course is hugely respected here and across the UK for his research leadership, the part he played in developing the Wellcome Building, his passion for building the PhD/ Post-doc community and promoting the public understanding of science, his many contributions to building the research reputation of the University, his work in Rwanda and his (often unseen) encouragement for young, up and coming academic staff. We thank David and wish him and his wife Maureen – also a great supporter of the University – all good wishes for the future.

And so, that's it. There is of course much unsaid and as David Duncan would observe with a rueful smile at the end of a difficult working day – "plenty of material for the campus novel..."

Elizabeth and I have thoroughly enjoyed our time by the Tay and we send thanks and best wishes to the students and staff of the University.

**Alan Langlands • Principal and Vice-Chancellor
February 2009**

“..the University goes on and will go from strength to strength in the future. It has been a wonderful experience to be part of this...”

Changing times for University

At the end of March, Sir Alan Langlands FRSE, Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University, will be standing down from the post he has held for eight and a half years to take up a new role as Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

Here he reflects on his time as Principal and tells Contact why he believes the University is well-positioned for the challenges ahead.

Much can happen in eight years and in the time since becoming the University's fifth Principal and Vice Chancellor Sir Alan Langlands, has overseen a period of significant change.

From the complete restructuring of the schools and colleges to the £200 million transformation of the campus and the drive towards greater sustainability even the most casual observer could hardly fail to notice that time has not been standing still.

So it may come as a surprise to some that from the outgoing Principal's perspective these changes have only ever been a means to an end. His primary motivation since taking on the role back in 2000 has been to "focus on the things that really matter".

"The University Charter has always been my guide – achieving excellence in learning and teaching, promoting pure and applied research at international levels of excellence and supporting economic social and cultural development. That's why we are here.

"These fundamentals were always the priority. And everything that has been done was done with them in mind. They have to be the foundation on which everything was built. If you have clarity of purpose, everything else follows.

"I wanted to support the achievements of students and staff and create a more cohesive university community, an environment of equal opportunity where everyone can develop to their full potential."

The latest annual report shows that this ambition is being realised. In 2008 research activity increased by a fifth, the results of the Research Assessment Exercise released in December, underlined the University's standing as a major player in a range of disciplines including civil engineering, art and design, computing, history, geography, law, medicine and life sciences.

Staff and students continue to win major national and international awards and student satisfaction surveys place Dundee high up the UK rankings. The University was also short listed for the Times Higher Education University of the Year Award 2008 and described by the Guardian as one of the "top 20 Universities in the UK."

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The past year also saw it described by the *Sunday Times* as “one of the finest institutions in Britain where researchers routinely push back the boundaries of knowledge and teachers inspire their charges”.

Looking over the past few years the University has won a prestigious Queen’s Anniversary Prize for excellence in higher education, been voted Scottish University of the Year in the *Sunday Times Good Universities Guide (2004/5)* and voted top for teaching quality in the UK by the *Times* and the *Times Higher Educational Supplement Guide* in 2005.

Sir Alan stresses however, that while delighted by the growing reputation of the University and immensely proud of the achievements of staff and students, there is “absolutely no room for complacency and still a lot more to do”. He is also aware that his time in office has attracted some criticism.

“I knew there were difficult decisions to be made,” he said. “The notion that things have to be affordable is not a difficult one but the human consequences of reducing costs and increasing efficiency are hard. I was very aware of that but I have to take the rough with the smooth and these decisions had to be made.

“Short term criticism has to be set alongside the medium and long term development of the University. The voluntary severance scheme, property disposals and improving the infrastructure for staff and students were all important steps in achieving a sustainable future for the University.

“We were criticised by some for the building programme but it needed to be done. When I arrived in 2000 the University buildings were in a very poor state. The campus looks better now and all students and staff deserve to work in a modern, clean environment.

“This work needs to continue and the new Estates Strategy highlights the need for continued investment in Duncan of Jordanstone, the Law School, in engineering and the Medical School.

“I think we are in a strong position to cope with the current economic downturn. Many other universities will have to take the kinds of decisions we have already taken.

“It is a great privilege to be the Principal and Vice Chancellor and I have thoroughly enjoyed every minute of my time here.”



“We must have the self-confidence to look forward and our reputation with the funding bodies is already very high. This is something else to build on.

“Over the last 18 months the University has won £130 million plus in research awards. The academic staff have worked very hard for this and I feel privileged to be surrounded by talented and motivated people who want Dundee to be successful. The development of a strong postgraduate research and post-doc community also gives me confidence for a future where real strength in depth will be important.”

Sir Alan, who came to Dundee after nearly seven years as Chief Executive of the National Health Service in England, added that he believed the University was a striking example of how a higher education institution could stay true to its ideals of excellence in education and research whilst being aware of its wider responsibilities to the community and the taxpayer.

“Universities can’t exist as ivory towers but it is possible to combine the fundamental truths with the knowledge and skills required to help the professions, businesses and the public services innovate and prosper; and there is no doubt that basic research undertaken in universities can be applied for the public good.

“I certainly believe that we are contributing to government objectives and to the wider community in growing and sharing wealth, improving health, expanding opportunities, enhancing the quality of life, improving the environment and contributing to the cultural development of Scotland. The annual report demonstrates this but these are broad objectives which, in my view, do not challenge the autonomy, freedom of action and freedom of expression in universities, principles which must remain the cornerstone of higher education.”

“The University also has a responsibility to the City of Dundee and the wider city-region. Bologna, Oxford and Harvard were founded to meet local needs and so was Dundee. We have a responsibility for the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of the people who support us.

“This translates into biotechnology businesses which have developed on the back of life sciences and the education and training of the nurses, teachers and doctors who will care for the next generation. Duncan of Jordanstone, the Literary Festival and many other university activities reach into the city and add to its cultural vibrancy. And of course the V&A would be a major coup, something worth striving for.”

Although looking forward to the challenges of his new post, which he takes up on 1 April, Sir Alan is certain he will miss Dundee.

“It is a great privilege to be the Principal and Vice Chancellor and I have thoroughly enjoyed every minute of my time here. There are things I would liked to have done and would still like to see develop but at least we have started the ball rolling.

“The UNESCO Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science, the Centre for Energy, Petroleum and Mineral Law and Policy, the Institute for Medical Science and Technology, the Health Informatics Centre, the new Clinical Research Centre and emerging plans for a new Arts & Humanities Research Institute all have great potential for the future.

John Milligan, Chair of Court, who has worked closely with Sir Alan Langlands over a number of years, praised his “outstanding” contribution to the University.

“The University has made enormous progress under his leadership,” he said. “He brought a great deal of experience to the role particularly in terms of developing a productive and collaborative attitude in a large, multi-faceted organisation.

“Working with him has been a positive experience. He always makes the effort to involve everyone in the decision-making process.

“He has a quiet sense of humour and works incredibly hard. He packs a lot of management effort into long days and extended weeks.

“Alan has achieved a great deal in establishing the Senior Management Team at the University. The extended and improved campus is a very obvious legacy and a great asset to students and staff.

“His greatest legacy however is the raising of the University’s research and development and teaching profile. The successes we have achieved and our current momentum going forward will lead to future successes.”

Mr Milligan also expressed his appreciation for the support offered to the University by Sir Alan’s wife Elizabeth.

“Lady Langlands has been a great supporter of Alan’s work at the University. She really has been an unsung hero and is worthy of our sincere thanks.”

“And the proposed Centre for Environmental Change and Human Resilience should be a new gathering point for environmental futures work, links with other universities and research institutes and a springboard for interdisciplinary working.

“Wouldn’t it be wonderful if Dundee could do for environmental sustainability, energy, water and food security over the next 25 years what it has done for human health and biology over the last 25?

“I would also have liked, if there had been more time, to forge stronger collaborations with other universities in the UK and overseas – mutual respect and deep education and research links will be important in the future. But whatever happens I will always be keen to see how Dundee is developing. I feel great loyalty to the University and I will miss its unique combination of people and place.

“When I first came here one of the things I was most apprehensive about was the ceremonial aspects of the role but I discovered that I really enjoyed graduations. They are such wonderful celebrations of the achievements of the students and the University as a whole, and perhaps that is what I will miss the most.”

For the record...

Since taking up post at Dundee, Sir Alan has:

- been awarded Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh
- received honorary fellowships from:
 - The Royal College of Physicians
 - The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
 - The Royal College of General Practitioners
 - The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
 - The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
- received honorary degrees from the University of Glasgow and the National Institute of Technology, Jalandhar, India
- chaired two significant government reviews, chaired the Board of UK Biobank (a Wellcome Trust/MRC funded genetic epidemiology study) and been a board member of the Office for the Strategic Coordination of Health Research of the UK Statistics Authority
- been awarded the HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Fellowship by the Nuffield Trust and named Scottish Public Service Leader of the Year in 2005

Strong RAE results welcomed

More than half of the University's research has been rated "world leading" or "internationally excellent" in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise.

The University is top in Scotland for civil engineering and biological and laboratory-based clinical sciences, all of which were among the top performers in the UK. The results also underline Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design's position as the pre-eminent art school in Scotland and places it as one of the best schools in the UK.

History, Geography and Law also achieved good results. History at Dundee achieved the highest percentage of staff in Scotland rated in the 4* and 3* categories ('world leading' and 'internationally excellent') while Geography was top-equal with St Andrews.

The University also achieved strong performances in Nursing & Midwifery, Computing, and Philosophy, areas where the University has made significant progress in recent years.

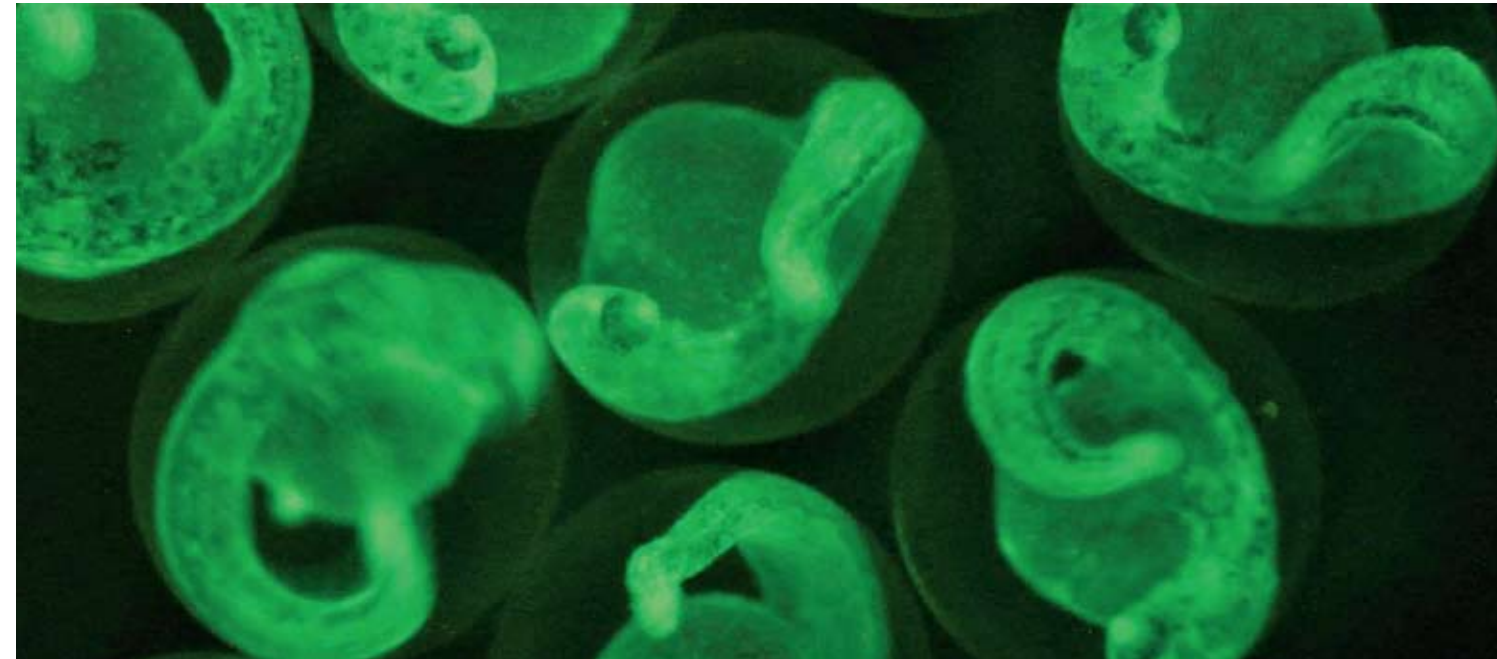
The University recorded scores at the 4* level (defined as 'world leading') in every subject area submitted to the RAE. Eight of Dundee's submissions were ranked in the top 20 in the UK in their respective fields.

'This is a strong result for Dundee and a tribute to the hard work, dedication and academic excellence of our staff', said Sir Alan Langlands, Principal of the University.

The Research Assessment Exercise is conducted jointly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL).

The primary purpose of the RAE 2008 is to measure research quality in all academic disciplines. The four higher education funding bodies intend to use the quality profiles to determine their contribution to research infrastructure with effect from 2009-10.

Guardian of the genome's missing anti-cancer link uncovered



Cancer Research UK scientists in Dundee and Singapore have discovered a missing link in the way cells protect themselves against cancer, according to research published in *Genes & Development*.

The scientists in Professor Sir David Lane's lab in the Medical Sciences Institute and Singapore's A*STAR Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology have discovered how cells switch p53, the tumour-suppressor gene known as the guardian of the genome, on and off.

Professor Sir David Lane, who is also Cancer Research UK's chief scientist and lead author of this latest research, co-discovered p53 30 years ago.

In this new study scientists used a genetic trick to make zebrafish turn green when the p53 gene was switched on to explore the way this gene was regulated.

They found that the p53 gene makes not only the well-established p53 protein, but also an alternative 'control switch' variation of the p53 protein - known as an isoform. It is the isoform that feeds back to regulate the p53 gene. In its active state p53 will trigger cell death - called apoptosis - or arrest cell division to make repairs to DNA.

Normally zebrafish can survive low doses of radiation. But zebrafish which couldn't make this isoform 'switch', died when exposed to low levels of radiation.

This proved that the isoform was critical in controlling p53's normal function to protect cells against the development of cancer - which includes ordering cells to die when they are badly damaged.

Scientists from Professor Sir David's lab had previously discovered that cells contained more than one isoform of p53 - but they didn't know how the isoforms were produced or what they did.

Zebrafish carry the same p53 gene as humans.

P53 is damaged or inactive in half of all cancers and has roles in cell development and ageing. In normal cells it is activated in response to cell damage and one of its functions is to order cells to die - a process called apoptosis - when DNA is damaged beyond repair.

"It is critical that p53 functions normally to prevent genetic mistakes being passed on to daughter cells which can lead to cancer. But until now no-one understood how this gene was controlled.

Professor Sir David Lane said: "We are delighted by these findings. Our research is focused on this p53 gene because it is so often damaged in cancer cells.

"The function of p53 is critical to the way that many cancer treatments kill cells since radiotherapy and chemotherapy act in part by triggering cell suicide in response to DNA damage - so understanding more about how this gene is controlled in cells is really important in finding ways to prevent cells from turning cancerous."

Water law funding for student exchange

The University has been awarded major funding from the European Union and the Government of Australia to train the next generation of specialists in the field of sustainable water resources.

Five Australian universities and three European leading water universities have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to exchange 90 post graduate students and 30 academic members of staff in the coming three years.

In total a grant of over AU\$ 1,000,000 (£500,000) has been awarded to Dundee and partners to enable students and staff members from the EU and Australia to share best practice and to improve global understanding of the importance of sustainability in water resources. The project is funded jointly by the Australian government and the European Union.

Over the next three years, 45 post graduate students from Dundee, Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands and the Technical University of Dresden in Germany will study for one semester at one of the participating universities in Australia.

In return, 45 post graduate students from Flinders University, University of South Australia, Deakin University, Central Queensland University and the University of Adelaide will come to Europe to study at one of the three participating European universities.

As well as exchanging students, staff members will visit the universities in the other continent to give guest lectures, to start joint PhD research projects and to develop joint courses.

Chris Bustin, Head of Administration for EU Partners and International Operations Manager said: "We are delighted that the European Union and the Government of Australia have seen fit to provide funding for this exciting project. As water becomes more scarce, the proper management of water resources will be one of the most controversial areas of Law, Policy and Science in this century. We hope that Dundee University students will be leading the way in this field for years to come."



FOI architect marks opening of new centre

A new joint venture by the University's Law School and the Scottish Information Commissioner aimed at strengthening Freedom of Information in Scotland has been established in Dundee.

The new Centre for Freedom of Information was launched in January at a special seminar and conference attended by one of the architects of the 2002 Scottish Freedom of Information Act, former Deputy First Minister Jim Wallace, now Lord Wallace of Tankerness, who gave the opening address.

Professor Alan Page, Dean of the Law School and co-director of the new Centre along with Scottish Information Commissioner Kevin Dunion, explained that the aim of the venture was to provide a central focus for developing research into FOI issues, in particular modelling decision making and examining bureaucratic culture.

"The idea for the Centre came about initially through discussions between Professor Janet McLean, who is Professor of Law and Governance at the Law School, and the Commissioner's Office in St Andrews," he said.

"Researching what is happening in terms of Freedom of Information in Scotland is a huge challenge but it is something we are very excited about and have a great deal of shared enthusiasm for.

"The governance of Scotland has changed out of all recognition over the last few years and Freedom of Information is just one aspect of that. The legislation was just the beginning. It is not just about documenting the change but researching and reflecting on what the changes mean and the impact they are having. We hope the centre will create the conceptual space to allow that reflection and the opportunity to discuss current FOI issues and practice."

Professor Page added that although there has been a major change in attitude towards freedom of information more still needs to be done.

"The culture change involved in Freedom of Information is massive. The culture, certainly in UK terms, was one of deep, ingrained secrecy but that is changing and transparency and openness are things we expect much more now. However we haven't entirely moved into the light.

"People still often see the costs of Freedom of Information rather than the benefits and we want to find out what is actually happening in this area rather than what people think is happening or what they might have heard anecdotally. We need to get beyond that.

"It is a very big area and we want to build an understanding of where we are now and look at where we might be heading and which areas we should explore. We want to pursue a serious programme of research which is informed and also has an agenda."

Potential areas of interest for the centre include research into Freedom of Information and human rights, environmental decision making and the impact the legislation has had on the governance of Scotland. It is hoped the new centre will also create opportunities for knowledge transfer and the provision of continuing professional development for the country's freedom of information officers within public bodies and local authorities.

It will also provide access to a rich seam of expertise from specialists in constitutional and civil law, Freedom of Information practitioners and the Commissioner's Office.

The launch of the centre, which saw keynote addresses from Professor Page and Kevin Dunion as well as a discussion chaired by Professor McLean, brought together legal practitioners, FOI officers, academics and campaigners.

Further seminars are already planned for later in the year. On Friday 27 March the focus will be 'Freedom of Information in the Devolved Scotland' while on Thursday 28 May the seminar will be 'Reflected glory? How does Scotland stand in the world of Freedom of Information?' To register interest for any of the seminars contact the centre at centrefoi@dundee.ac.uk



Dundee named as research hub for new bioenergy centre

The University has been named as one of six research hubs to benefit from the biggest ever single UK public investment in bioenergy research.

A £27 million Sustainable Bioenergy Centre was launched in January by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council to provide the science to underpin and develop the important and emerging UK sustainable bioenergy sector - and to replace the petrol in our cars with fuels derived from plants.

The Dundee-led part of the Centre will concentrate on improving barley straw for lignin properties and transferring the new knowledge to other crops. Lignin is a polymer in plants that makes it difficult to access sugars which are vital for bioenergy production. The Dundee-led programme aims to alter lignin production in barley to make it easier to produce bioenergy from waste straw without reducing the quality of the crop.

The project will work with a number of partners including the Scottish Crop Research Institute (SCRI), the Scottish Government Rural and Environment Research and Analysis Directorate (RERAD) and the University of York.

"This is a very exciting collaboration that matches research excellence from each of the project partners in areas relevant to the production of 'second-generation' biofuels, those that do not impact food production," said Professor Claire Halpin, head of the Dundee Hub and a scientist within the College of Life Sciences.

"If we can find a way of accessing these key sugars in barley straw it would have a significant impact on the types of agricultural waste and dedicated energy crops that could be used to produce sustainable bioenergy. We are using barley as model, partly due to the excellent work already done on barley at SCRI, but hopefully we will then be able to transfer results to other crops."

Peter Gregory, Chief Executive and Institute Director of SCRI said: "We are delighted to be involved in such an important and innovative project, which will build on our previous research work and collaborations to deliver new environmentally-friendly fuels.

"The work of the Sustainable Bioenergy Centre will help pave the way for a significant change in energy use leading to a more secure future for both energy provision and food production."

Sustainable bioenergy offers the potential to provide a significant source of clean, low carbon and secure energy, and to generate thousands of new 'green collar' jobs. It uses non-food crops, such as willow, industrial and agricultural waste products and inedible parts of crops, such as straw, and so does not take products out of the food chain.

Minister of State for Science and Innovation, Lord Drayson, said: "Investing £27 million in this new centre involves the single biggest UK public investment in bioenergy research.

"The centre is exactly the sort of initiative this country needs to lead the way in transforming the exciting potential of sustainable biofuels into a widespread technology that can replace fossil fuels."

"The expertise and resources of the University of Dundee makes it well placed to make a valuable contribution to the new BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Centre and help to make sustainable, environmentally-friendly bioenergy a reality."

The BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Centre is focussed on six research hubs of academic and industrial partners, based at each of the Universities of Cambridge, Dundee and York and Rothamsted Research and two at the University of Nottingham.

Another 7 universities and institutes are involved and 15 industrial partners across the hubs are contributing around £7M of the funding. The Scottish Government is contributing up to £600,000 over the next three years to fund SCRI's involvement in the Dundee hub's activities in the Centre.

In Dundee the grant will create five new posts - three post-doctoral researchers and two technicians - for the five-year period of the grant. Professor Halpin said it would also further strengthen the growing bonds between the University and SCRI.

Professor takes lead in new UK research group

Professor Marion McMurdo, Head of Ageing and Health within the School of Medicine has been appointed Chair of the Age and Ageing specialty group of the UK Clinical Research Network (UK CRN).

This newly formed specialty group will bring together researchers from throughout the United Kingdom to improve the delivery of UK CRN portfolio of research.

Professor McMurdo said, "This new network provides a great opportunity to increase both the quantity and quality of ageing research in the UK. It will allow researchers to work more collaboratively to address the many pressing questions about how to improve the health and wellbeing of our growing older population."

The Age and Ageing group's first task will be to obtain an overview of ageing research in the UK via the CRN portfolio and then to work with researchers to reduce barriers to successful trial recruitment.

The group can use evidence of research activity to justify the allocation of additional resource to ageing research via NHS support costs. Staff involved in trials featured on the portfolio have free access to national training and education programmes run via the UK CRN.

Clinical Leads from the Comprehensive Local Research Networks in England, together with research leaders from Scotland and Wales will form the core specialty group. The intention is to expand membership to include researchers from non-medical disciplines as well as lay representation.



Sir Philip Cohen wins life sciences award

Professor Sir Philip Cohen has been named winner of a prestigious Scottish Enterprise Life Sciences Award 2009 for his leading contribution to Life Sciences.

Sir Philip, who is Director of the Medical Research Council Protein Phosphorylation Unit and Royal Society Research Professor within the College of Life Sciences, said he was "delighted and honoured" to receive the award.

"This award recognised the extremely high standards and quality of work that is carried out at the Medical Research Council Protein Phosphorylation Unit," he said.

Rhona Allison, Director of Life Sciences at Scottish Enterprise said, "Professor Sir Philip Cohen's award for Leading Individual Contribution to Life Sciences in Scotland is testament to the ongoing success of the entire life sciences industry in Scotland, both individuals and companies."

Sir Philip recently received £10 million funding to set up the Scottish Institute for cell Signalling (SCILLS) where he has been appointed as its first Director.

He also founded and is the co-Director of the Division of Signal Transduction Therapy (DSTT), widely regarded as an exemplary model for the link up between academics and the pharmaceutical industry. It received a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2006. The DSTT is supported by several leading pharmaceutical companies including Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline.



Last year, Sir Philip was elected a Foreign Associate of the United States National Academy of Sciences and received the Royal Medal for the Biological Sciences of the Royal Society of London.

Psychology professor given rare honour



Professor Alan Kennedy, Emeritus Professor of Psychology within the College of Arts and Social Sciences, has been elected to Honorary Membership of the Experimental Psychology Society.

Honorary membership is granted by the Society for "outstanding eminence and seniority". Only eighteen Honorary Members are elected from over 700 members of the Society.

Professor Kennedy is currently the only psychologist working in Scotland in this category. As well as his role within the School of Psychology he also holds an honorary appointment in the Laboratory of Cognitive Neuroscience in the University of Paris V.

New graduate internship certificate

The University's Careers Service has become the first in the UK to offer graduates an internship certificate which will allow them greater access to industry after the end of their studies and boost their CVs.

The Scottish Internship Graduate Certificate (SIGC) is a post graduate certificate consisting of three credit-bearing Modules and offers a six month placement with a high profile employer within Scotland.

'It is anticipated that the internship will give students a real advantage in terms of being noticed by Scottish / UK graduate employers,' said Graham Nicholson, Director of the Careers Service at the University.

'We are ahead of the game in this - we are already inviting applications for places - and it is exciting that we can offer graduates this unique opportunity.'

Through the programme students specifically will enhance their employment prospects in the UK and abroad by gaining valuable hands-on experience within a Scottish business whilst developing a real insight into the UK business climate and culture.

'This builds on the success of the Internship Module we have been running at undergraduate level for the past three years, where we have built excellent links throughout industry.'

The exact nature of career opportunities offered through the SIGC will be dependent on previous qualifications and experience of individual students. However, it is expected that SIGC will significantly boost student employability and career prospects in a variety of sectors including financial businesses, IT, professional services, legal firms and banking, amongst others.

Anyone seeking further information on the SIGC should contact the Careers Service at www.dundee.ac.uk/careers or tel: 01382 384017.

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UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

Babies show need to communicate from birth



Babies are born with a strong motivation to communicate with us, according to a new study by Dr Emese Nagy at the School of Psychology.

Working with 90 newborn babies, aged between three and 96 hours, physician- psychologist Dr Nagy, found that babies almost immediately notice when there is a change in the way the other person relates to them.

In the study, the researcher spent three minutes communicating with the newborns. She smiled, looked at the baby, gently talked and touched the infant, just as mothers naturally do with their babies.

Dr Nagy then froze her face for three minutes and stopped responding. The babies' reaction was clear and strong. They noticed the change and protested by looking away, then checked whether the experimenter had changed her mind. They then turned away, became visibly distressed, and many of them started crying.

When communication was restarted again, the babies took some time to rebuild their trust, by turning their heads and slowly re-establishing eye contact. The crying decreased and eventually stopped as babies became engaged again.

The study is the first to show clear evidence of such intersubjective sensitivity in the newborn. Without any prior learning, the babies notice subtle change in the other's behaviour and respond - and protest - strongly when the communication is disturbed.

Dr Nagy said, 'We all spend most of our social life communicating and relating to each other, it is crucial in our physical and mental well-being, and health. To feel that we belong to the other, is a basic need.'

'This study showed that even newborn infants come to this world with a powerful sensitivity to the other person. They show eager readiness to relate, they have the skills to relate, and they protest when the other is there, but not responding to them. Such results may have implications for infant mental health in that not only older infants but even newborns, from their first hours of life, are sensitive to disturbed communication. Newborns already actively shape their interpersonal space, share our humanity, and part of our intersubjective community.'

The study was conducted in Hungary and was funded by the British Academy. The paper was published in *Developmental Psychology*, the journal of the American Psychological Association.

Memory problem for children with ADHD

Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have serious problems with short-term memory according to research carried out by academics within the University's School of Medicine and psychologists at the University of Strathclyde.

The study found that there were marked differences in the ability to be able to hold and use information in short-term memory between children with ADHD and those without the disorder. Researchers believe this may explain the poor attention and learning frequently shown by children with ADHD.

Significantly, the research included only children with ADHD who had not been previously treated with any medication showing that short-term memory difficulties are part of the disorder and not caused by the medications used to treat the ADHD symptoms, such as methylphenidate, also known as Ritalin.

Children in the study completed a number of computer-based memory puzzles similar to computer games to help them stay engaged during the memory assessment. Children with ADHD still showed difficulties on a number of the memory puzzles despite often saying that they enjoyed doing them.

The researchers concluded that children with ADHD have difficulties in holding and using information in their short term memory, which may explain why they frequently forget things and appear disorganised. These difficulties would impact significantly on their ability to learn.

Dr David Coghill, an international authority on ADHD who ran the study with colleague Dr Sarah Seth and Strathclyde University psychology lecturer Dr Sinead Rhodes said the results confirmed and built on previous work.

'They clearly demonstrate that many children with ADHD have very poor short term memories,' he said. 'This helps explain some of the difficulties that they have in the classroom. They will find it much harder to remember what has been taught unless they are given prompts, such as lesson notes, to help them. Notably, our previous studies strongly suggested that methylphenidate can help with these memory problems.'

The study was funded by a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council.

CONFERENCE OFFER



Prices from £81.25 per person

Day Delegate

- Main meeting room based on eight hours
- Morning tea/coffee served with shortbread and pastries
- Mid-morning tea/coffee
- Afternoon tea/coffee served with homebaking
- Chef's choice hot & cold buffet served with tea/coffee in our main restaurant
- Standard av equipment in main meeting room
- Laptop and LCD projector
- One syndicate room (for under ten delegates)
- Two syndicate rooms (for over ten delegates)

Support is also available from in-house technician

WI FI is also available conference offer

Prices from £24.75 per person

24 Hour Delegate

- Main meeting room based on eight hours
- Morning tea/coffee served with shortbread and pastries
- Mid-morning tea/coffee
- Afternoon tea/coffee served with homebaking
- Chef's choice hot & cold buffet served with tea/coffee in our main restaurant
- Standard av equipment in main meeting room
- One syndicate room (for under ten delegates)
- Two syndicate rooms (for over ten delegates)
- A 3-course dinner served with coffee
- Overnight en-suite accommodation for single occupancy
- Full scottish breakfast
- Laptop and LCD projector

Support is also available from in-house technician

WI FI is also available



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The V&A in Dundee



A major conference highlighting ambitious plans for an iconic building on Dundee's waterfront to create a presence in the city for the internationally renowned V&A Museum, will be held at the University this month.

To launch the conference Godfrey Worsdale, Director of the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead and formerly the Director who oversaw the construction and development of the Middlesbrough Institute for Modern Art (MIMA), will give a public lecture setting out the economic and cultural benefits arising from the development of new cultural institutions.

The free public lecture, A Cultural Accumulator, begins at 6pm on Tuesday 24 February in the Dalhousie Building, Old Hawkhill.

The conference, due to take place the following day in the Dalhousie Building, will include a presentation on the completed feasibility study which explored the creation of the waterfront building to house collections from the V&A Museum and attract the best international touring exhibitions in contemporary art and design.

It will also include an address by Mark Jones, Director of the V&A, a presentation on the Regeneration of Bilbao and the Guggenheim Effect by delegates from Bilbao and an update on the Dundee Waterfront Development by Mike Galloway, Director of Planning at Dundee City Council.

Sir Alan Langlands, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University, will chair a closing session of the conference aimed at moving the V&A project forward.

"This conference will provide a great opportunity to bring together leading figures from across Scotland to discuss the benefits and challenges in bringing such a vibrant and exciting cultural institution as the V&A to Dundee," said Georgina Follett, Deputy Principal and Dean of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design and one of the speakers at the conference.

"We have already carried out a very vigorous feasibility study which will be discussed at the conference but what we want to do now is to move this whole project on and explore the best ways of making it happen."

Tickets for the public lecture are now available from the University Online Store or by contacting the Events Office on 01382 388046.

"...what we want to do now is to move this whole project on and explore the best ways of making it happen..."



V&A

AT DUNDEE
MAKING IT HAPPEN

Profile • Professor Colin Palmer



Research carried out by Professor Colin Palmer, Chair of Pharmacogenomics in the Biomedical Research Institute, could revolutionise medical care in the future.

A pioneer and leading advocate of “personalised medicine,” Professor Palmer and his fellow researchers at the Institute are aiming to shift the emphasis away from drugs designed to treat the illness to drugs designed to treat individual patients.

“We’re trying to get rid of the one-size fits all approach to medicine and create more effective drugs tailored to the individual,” he explained.

“To do that we are studying the genetic factors that affect how people respond to drugs. Pharmacogenomics is the study of how genetic information may be used to personalise medicine by providing new drugs that target individuals with different genetic make-ups and to provide genetic tests to optimise the use of already available medicines.”

Professor Palmer, who highlighted his research in a Discovery Days lecture last month, added that cancer medicine is one area where personalised treatment is already in use and where genetic information is used to help clinicians tailor treatment to individual patients.

However he hopes his research into other areas, particularly diabetes, heart disease and asthma, will result in a more widespread acceptance of this approach.

“In asthma for example there is a gene that seems to make some asthma inhalers work very poorly,” he said. “In fact there are studies from the USA which suggest that for some people with this phenotype their lung function actually worsens when they use the inhalers.

“We are currently testing people who have this genetic variant and carrying out trials to find which type of treatment will be most effective for each individual.

“It is a two stage process. There is no point knowing that a drug doesn’t work for certain people if you can’t offer a better alternative so we are working on different solutions and testing them.”

Work on diabetes has also shown that people with a particular type of gene variant respond poorly to one of the most common kinds of diabetes treatment.

“In type 2 diabetes there are two different treatments to improve blood glucose control,” explained Professor Palmer.

“These drugs, sulphonylureas and metformin, work in completely different ways and are used fairly randomly. It really is a process of trial and error.

“Our studies have shown, however, that people with a potent type 2 diabetes gene variant respond poorly to sulphonylureas. This clearly tips the balance in favour of prescribing metformin to these patients.

“This test is now commercially available but we are currently investigating how we can improve the test using much more genetic information before we use it in clinical practice.”

Professor Palmer and his team are also investigating the genes involved in defining whether an individual can tolerate the use of statins, a class of drugs used to lower cholesterol.

“Statins are one of the most commonly prescribed drugs in the elderly. They are extremely effective in lowering the rate of heart attacks and have saved many lives. They are also very commonly used in people with type 2 diabetes.

“However they are not without their side effects. The main one is muscle pain and damage. We have found a gene which predisposes individuals to having this damage and about 40% of people with this gene cannot tolerate higher doses of statins.

“We are currently leading a very large scale effort to find genes in statin response and intolerance.”

While carrying out gene studies into diabetes Professor Palmer and a group of scientists from around the UK came across a gene which sparked huge media interest - FTO or the “pie gene” as it was dubbed in some tabloid newspapers.

“FTO was the second strongest gene for Type 2 diabetes in our study but it only leads to Type 2 diabetes by promoting obesity. We wanted to find out how it was doing that.”

Professor Palmer’s latest study into FTO, published late last year, provoked another media storm when it found that schoolchildren with the common variant of the gene ate 100 more calories in an eating test than children without the gene.

The research, which was published in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*, measured the metabolism, fat composition, exercise and eating behaviours of 100 primary school children in Tayside.

It found that children with the FTO gene were more likely to choose higher calorie foods.

“The results from this study were a real surprise,” said Professor Palmer, “because we found that the FTO gene didn’t affect a person’s ability to know when to stop eating and it didn’t change how they metabolised foods. What it did seem to affect was what they were choosing to eat.

“What we want to do now is find out why this is the case. It could be to do with taste and texture as there are very strong genetics involved in taste so we’d like to know whether the FTO gene is involved in influencing taste perception.

“The genetics of obesity are complicated and it is likely that there are other genes having an effect but we are now clearly seeing the effects of genetic variants like this one in FTO.

“And it is an example where genetics provides a new gene that could be used to design new drugs to combat obesity.”

Professor Palmer is confident that in time personalised medicine using genetic information will be the norm, particularly as the technology involved in genetic research is advancing at a staggering pace.

“We now have a genetic test or “Gene-chip” that provides information on two million genetic variants in each patient,” he said. “These gene-chips were only invented about three years ago and then they could only assess 10,000 variants.

“This 2 million variant test has only been available since the middle of last year and we are one of the first groups in the world to use it.”

And he added that Tayside is one of the best places to carry out research into pharmacogenomics.

“We have a unique opportunity here to study the genetic factors that define drug response and adverse drug reactions. Since the 1970s Tayside has used a unique identifier for every patient record in the region. That is unique in the UK.

“Since 1993 every prescription encashed in Tayside has been recorded on a database. This is unique in the world. And since 1997 we have been collecting DNA samples from patients in Tayside to link genetic information to these medical databases.

“In collaboration with Professor Andrew Morris we have now collected samples from over 17,000 people with a view to finding genetic factors involved in diabetes susceptibility, outcomes in diabetes such as cardiovascular disease and how people with diabetes respond to a wide variety of drugs.

“There really is a unique opportunity here and combined with the staggering pace of technological progress we are really excited about the potential for revealing new genetic tests for drug response.”

The Art of Conferencing



Bringing conferences to Dundee is big business. Most recent figures show that in a single year conferences and events generated a massive £48 million for the local economy.

The University has played a significant role in that success with an increasing number of conferences hosted by researchers and academics from across the different colleges.

In the last few years alone conferences on subjects as diverse as computing, maths, biomechanics, accountancy, politics, psychology, nursing, engineering and construction have come to Dundee bringing with them thousands of delegates.

Karen Tocher, business tourism manager at Dundee & Angus Convention Bureau, revealed the direct value of business tourism over the past decade has soared by 400%.

But hosting conferences doesn't just provide a boost in economic terms. They can bring major career benefits too for the academics organising them.

Dr Michael Brown, a lecturer in the School of Civil Engineering, organised last summer's British Geotechnical Association Annual Conference on Foundations.

Whilst admitting that it was "extremely hard work and very time consuming" Dr Brown is in no doubt that it was well worth while.

"I had organised smaller conferences at other universities but this one was the biggest and the first time I had been involved in producing a conference book which increased the work load," he said.

"It was two years of hard work but there are definite benefits. I'm editing a major geotechnical work - a manual for the UK, I've been asked to be on a journal panel and I'm on the board of the British Geotechnical Association. All that has come about because of the conference.

"It has also introduced me to hundreds of people in my discipline so it has had great networking benefits."

For Professor Alan Dobson, Director of the Institute of Transatlantic, European and American Studies, conference organising has played a major role in raising the profile of a whole academic department.

Professor Dobson hosted the first Transatlantic Studies Association Conference in 2002 with the aim of using it to launch a journal devoted to transatlantic studies. Since then the conference, the association and the journal have gone from strength to strength.

"It has all taken off in a massive way," he said. "We are now the leading academic organisation for transatlantic studies and we are based here in Dundee. We have a mailing list of around 600 worldwide, our own website, an annual newsletter and ebulletin and the conference returns to Dundee every two years.

"It raises the profile of the University and it also sells Dundee as some of the delegates stay on for short breaks.

"It also creates a wonderful network of contacts and helps young academics into the profession. The conferences have provided research students and younger colleagues with the perfect opportunity and platform to present papers in familiar surroundings and meet other young academics."

For anyone considering trying their hand at conference organising the advice from Professor Dobson and Dr Brown is to be realistic about the commitment necessary and make use of the support available particularly that offered by the Dundee & Angus Convention Bureau.

Both academics are part of the Bureau's Ambassador Programme - an initiative aimed at providing support to individuals and organisations who can represent Dundee and Angus around the world and who host, or are considering hosting, conferences and events in the region.

"I found the Convention Bureau very helpful," said Dr Brown. "They are very professional and well-organised and they do this kind of thing on a daily basis. They organised a civic reception for the delegates, researched potential venues and provided funding for promotional materials. They also chase you up and remind you what needs doing and when which was great."

Dr Steve Parkes, Reader at the Space Technology Centre in the School of Computing and organiser of the first International SpaceWire Conference which attracted considerable media interest, is also full of praise for the support offered by the Bureau.

"For anyone thinking of organising a conference I would certainly recommend they get in touch with the Convention Bureau as they offer a fantastic service," he said.

"They helped with hotel bookings, organising trips, transport all of which would have been very time consuming if we had had to do it ourselves."

The Bureau can also help with actually bringing a conference to Dundee in the first place and they advice getting in touch well in advance of any event.

"We can help with the initial bid proposal," said Lorna Reid, the Bureau's association manager. "We can provide the necessary information to put together a winning presentation package including site visits for the conference committee. Our services include online delegate registration and accommodation booking, destination support, delegate information packs, venue finding and site inspections."

Dr Parkes added that he was also impressed by the support offered by West Park Conference Centre in Perth Road and the University's finance office, a view shared by Professor Dobson and Dr Brown.

Top tips for conference success

- 1) Be realistic about the level of commitment required in organising a conference
- 2) Be prepared for lots of hard work
- 3) Get in touch with the Convention Bureau for support and advice
- 4) Make use of University expertise in terms of PR, marketing, design and finance
- 5) Make sure admin support is available
- 6) Know your audience
- 7) Set a budget
- 8) Provide a functional, informative website
- 9) Choose a good, supportive venue
- 10) Include a good social programme!

"West Park is a great venue and the food was excellent which is always important," he said. "The University Finance Office were very good too in handling all the payments which allowed us to concentrate on the technical side of the conference."

For potential organisers he also advises making sure there is adequate administrative support in place, a fully functioning website and appropriate sponsors to help market the event.

"We were lucky in that we had the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, The European Space Agency, NASA and the Japanese Space Agency as sponsors. I also had very good admin support which is vital because there has to be someone available to sort out problems as soon as they arise.

"It is also important to know your audience and your market. We knew the SpaceWire community very well and the conference was a very well-focussed technical conference where everything was of interest to the people who attended.

"I also found the Principal's Office and External Relations very helpful in supporting the conference and also helping us publicise it."

The Convention Bureau can be contacted via email at: lorna.reid@conventiondundeeandangus.co.uk

For PR, events, marketing and design advice contact: Press Office at press@dundee.ac.uk, Events at events@dundee.ac.uk or Design • Print • Marketing at g.b.keir@dundee.ac.uk

Poetry project wins major research award

A major new project, involving researchers in the Schools of Humanities, Fine Art and Psychology, and aimed at exploring how readers respond to the visual aspects of poetry, has been awarded more than £400,000 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The award is part of the AHRC's £5.5 million Beyond Text programme set up in 2007 to tackle key questions of how people communicate using performance, sounds, images and objects, and is one of the largest research awards ever made to the School of Humanities.

Dr Andrew Roberts, Reader in English, who will be leading a research team based in Dundee and the University of Kent, said that the Poetry Beyond Text project will use psychological, critical and creative methods to look at the rich interactions of text and image in contemporary culture.

The two-year-project, beginning in March, will lead to new works of art and poetry which will be displayed through exhibitions, a website and an on-line gallery, as well as academic and scientific publications analysing readers' responses.

The project brings together researchers from a range of backgrounds and includes Dundee academics Dr Martin Fisher, Reader in Psychology and Mary Modeen, Senior Lecturer in the School of Fine Art and course leader for Art, Philosophy and Contemporary Practices and from the University of Kent, Dr Anna Schaffner, a lecturer in Comparative Literature and Dr Ulrich Weger, a lecturer in Psychology.

The funding will also allow the recruitment of two post-doctoral researchers.

"We'll be looking at the way artists and poets combine text and images and the way people respond to them", said Dr Roberts.

"We'll be focusing on a wide range of works, including artists' books and prints, books of poems with photographs, concrete poetry where words are arranged to make particular patterns and shapes on the page and the moving words and images found in digital poetry, a relatively new form of poetry which is usually web-based and often interactive.

"Psychologists have well-established data through eye-tracking and other techniques on how people read texts and also how they view images. We are interested in finding out what happens when readers are presented with art works which combine both.

"If the text and image are separate elements do we look at text or image first or do we move from one to the other. If they are fully integrated do we adopt a reading or a viewing approach? Do we, for example, read from top to bottom and left to right, as if we were looking at a more conventionally-arranged poem or do we treat the poem as a form of image?"

"We'll also be looking at the effect of the way the artwork is presented and the previous knowledge of the reader and what determines whether the visual aspect enriches or limits the meaning of the words

"For example, sometimes the shape of a poem, or an accompanying image, can seem to determine the subject of the poem, reducing the possibilities of interpretation. In other cases, the two elements can each prompt further interpretative possibilities."

Dr Roberts added that the project will involve a mix of poets, artists, scholars, scientists, students and members of the public and that participants in experiments will be regarded as "co-researchers."

"We've developed, on the basis of our previous research in this area, a strategy of "reflective feedback" in which our assessments of participants' cognitive processes while they are reading various types of poetry will be presented back to them. They will then be asked to write their own responses and we will be able to explore how they react.

"We're hoping the process will also offer inspiration to poets and artists, through reflection on the creative and interpretative processes.

"We'll be starting with work already written but we will be inviting poets and artists to create work in response to the investigations."

These works of art will be exhibited first in Dundee and then at future exhibitions in London and Edinburgh as well as appearing online. For more information on the Poetry Beyond Text: Vision, Text and Cognition project visit the AHRC's Beyond Text website at: <http://projects.beyondtext.ac.uk/poetrybeyondtext/index.php>



BEYOND TEXT

Open day at Clinical Research Centre

Tayside's new £13 million Clinical Research Centre, which was officially opened last summer, will be opening its doors to the public next month with an open day aimed at highlighting the work of the centre to local people.

Visitors to the facility, which was developed by the University in close partnership with NHS Tayside, will have the opportunity to see around the custom-built, state-of-the-art facilities including the body scanning suite, consulting rooms and equipment.

They will also be able to speak to staff, find out more about clinical research, learn about CPR and take part in a range of health checks including blood pressure and BMI measuring.

Cameron Glen, Business Development Manager at the CRC, said the open day was aimed at raising awareness of the new centre and highlighting the importance of clinical research.

"We want to make sure that the people of Tayside have the opportunity to see our new facilities and meet our staff to discuss any questions they may have about clinical research," he said.

"The open day is part of a national Clinical Research Facility programme and we're hoping to explain why clinical research is a good thing, how people can be sure it is safe and ethical and how they can find out more and ultimately help. Our hope is that it will encourage future recruitment to forthcoming projects."

Mr Glen added that stalls offering information about particular trials and how they work will be on display around the centre as will some of the devices invented in Tayside and Scotland to improve medical care.

The Clinical Research Centre, situated adjacent to Ninewells Hospital, was officially opened in July last year by Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing. It began welcoming its first patients a few months earlier in April.

Acting as a hub for clinical trial activity it links to satellite units elsewhere in Tayside and Fife and aims to carry out studies focusing on a range of areas including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and neuroscience in order to improve prevention, earlier diagnosis and improved treatments.

court news

At its December meeting the Court considered the Financial Statements and Annual Report and spent time debating the process for finding and selecting a new Principal.

Finance

The Court received and approved draft financial statements for the year to 31 July 2008. Both the Finance & Policy and Audit Committees had examined the statements, and both recommended that Court approve them.

The statements showed that the University had achieved a good performance overall, with an operating result before exceptional items of £2.5m, an improvement of £6.3m over the previous year. Income had increased by 9% in the year to £191m, with particularly strong growth in research activity, up 19%; costs had increased by 5%, hence the improved operating position.

Expenditure on land and buildings was £30m for the year, of which £18m had come from external grants or gains on disposals. Borrowings as at 31 July 2008 had reduced to £10.5m from £15m at the same time in the previous year. This reflected strong operating cash flow, as a result of favourable working capital movements, for the most part from research grant income paid in advance. As this represented future cash commitments, it would therefore need to be replaced with new activity to maintain a favourable cash position.

In terms of the Balance Sheet, the University's net assets had fallen as a consequence of a significant increase in the University's pension liability. The pension liability had increased as a result of the combination of a number of factors, including poorer than anticipated performance of the investment portfolio and revised longevity assumptions.

The Convener of the Audit Committee reported that the Committee had received favourable reports from both internal and external auditors, and it was clear that the process of continuous improvement in the University's financial management was progressing well.

The Financial Statements are available online at:
www.somis.dundee.ac.uk/finance/

New University Secretary appointed



The University has announced the appointment of Dr Jim McGeorge as its new Secretary. Dr McGeorge, who is currently Deputy Secretary at the University of Stirling, will take up his position on 16 March.

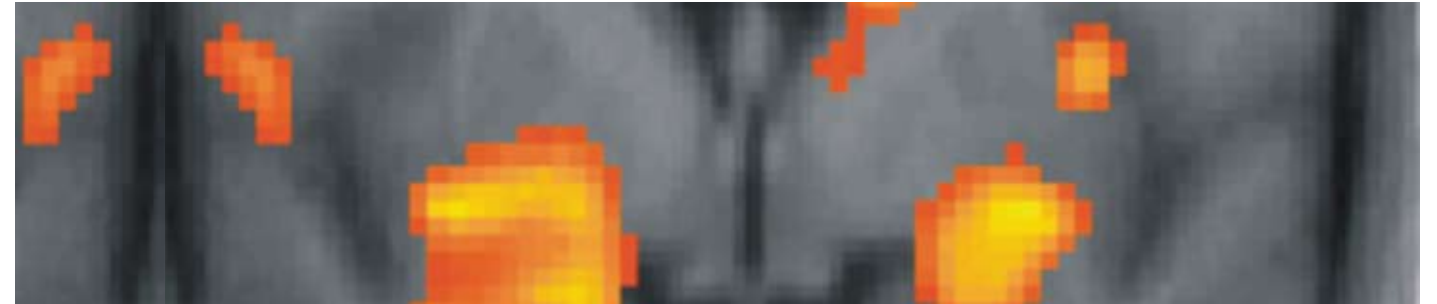
Mr John Milligan, Chair of Court said he was delighted with the appointment.

"He impressed the selection committee with his knowledge and experience of university management and his strong understanding of the Scottish higher education scene," said Mr Milligan. "I look forward to working with him as we continue to build on the achievements of the University."

Dr McGeorge, who is a science graduate of the University of Liverpool and holds a PhD from Stirling said he was looking forward to his new role.

"I am very pleased to be taking up this post at Dundee and I am very much looking forward to working with staff, students, University Court and the senior management team at Dundee," he said.

Golden day of research at Discovery Days



Eight newly-appointed professors shared the stage with three of the University's most eminent scientists at this year's Discovery Day last month.

The eight new professors from fields as diverse as computing, social work, engineering, medicine and genetics joined Professor Sir Philip Cohen, Professor Sir David Lane and Professor Roger Fletcher in a day-long celebration of the University's academic and research talent.

Sir Philip Cohen won the highly prestigious Royal Society's Gold Medal in 2008 while Roger Fletcher and Sir David Lane were both honoured with Gold Medals from the Royal Society of Edinburgh. The award winning trio took part in a 'Discovering Gold' series of short lectures highlighting the work that has brought them such success.

Earlier in the day the eight new professors had 15 minutes each to share their enthusiasm and knowledge of their particular area of expertise.

The short, showcase Discovery Day lectures - now in their sixth year at Dundee - have a reputation for providing an entertaining and accessible glimpse into a range of challenging and often complex subjects. Their format has become a model for the sector, imitated by a number of other universities in the UK.

This year topics included the role of carers (Professor Timothy Kelly), marine engineering (Professor Dong Sheng Jeng), brain imaging and psychiatry (Professor Douglas Steele), computer vision (Professor Stephen McKenna), personalised medicine (Professor Colin Palmer), accessible technology (Professor Vicki Hanson), numerical analysis (Professor Ping Lin) and the use of databases in predicting hospital admissions and monitoring drug safety (Professor Peter Donnan).

University Principal Sir Alan Langlands who officially opened this year's lectures said, 'The Discovery Days are an opportunity to share the fascinating research being pursued at the University, to inspire colleagues, students, families and friends, and to celebrate the appointments of our new professors.'

'We are delighted this year to be able to use the Discovery Days to honour our three Royal Medal winners Philip Cohen, Roger Fletcher and David Lane - ideal role models for the new generation of professors.'

This year's Discovery Day marked the end of an era for director Carol Pope, who retired from the University after 15 years.

As well coordinating Discovery Days since its inception Carol was also Publishing Manager of Dundee University Press Ltd, a key figure in the running of the Dundee Book Prize and Communications Director within the Principal's Office.

She joined the University in 1994 first as press officer later becoming Head of Press and Publications. In 2003 she was appointed Communications Director.

Her background is in the media and publishing where she has worked as a syndicated columnist, journalist, editor and author. Her book, *Baby Monthly*, accompanied the BBC2 series of the same name interprets developmental psychology for a lay audience and was published by BBC Books in 1994.



Poet takes up new post to help students "Write Right"

Students from across all four University Colleges are being offered increased opportunities to improve their academic writing skills with the appointment of writer and poet Gordon Meade as a new Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellow.

Gordon, who was previously Writer in Residence with Dundee District Libraries and Creative Writing Fellow at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in the 1990s, joins existing RLF Writing Fellow Jonathan Falla in the newly constituted Academic Achievement Unit within the Division of Academic Affairs.

Gordon's *Write Right* programme offers undergraduate students free advice in one-to-one consultations on any aspect of academic or creative writing. It complements Jonathan's Just Write programme which is tailored to final year undergraduate and post-graduate students.

Students from a wide variety of courses have already benefitted from Gordon's expertise in offering writing support and advice.

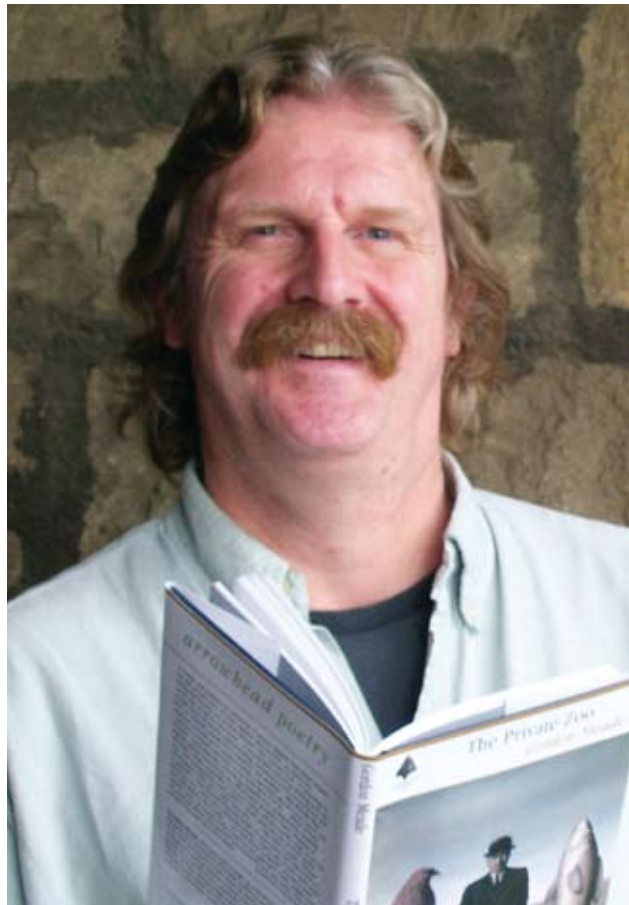
"I took up post last semester and I've been fairly busy from the start," he said. "I've been seeing students from lots of different subject areas which makes it very interesting for me. I've been working with students from subjects that are new to me, for example nursing and law so the diversity is fascinating.

"I've also been working with quite a few art students faced with writing dissertations and that's great for me too because I have quite a bit of experience in that area because of the time I spent at the art college."

Regardless of the subject being studied Gordon aims to help students find ways to express their ideas effectively, produce clear and professional writing and help them become more confident and competent writers.

"I find the main issues aren't so much things like grammar or punctuation but how to go about structuring an essay, constructing an argument and actually planning and organising the work. Often students just launch straight into answering a question without any real planning or they find it very difficult to get started at all.

"It can all be a bit overwhelming but I always stress to students that what we are doing is helping them express what they already know. They know more about their subject than I do so we concentrate on planning and structuring an essay and take it from there."



Gordon added that students can refer themselves to the programme and he is happy to see anyone looking to improve their writing.

"I would certainly encourage anyone worried about their writing to get in touch. I won't do the writing for them but I'll try to help where I can."

Gordon, who has also worked with vulnerable young people in schools, drop-in centres and hospitals and is working on his latest collection of poetry, is based on the fifth floor of the Tower Building and offers appointments on Thursdays and Fridays during semester time.

Appointments to meet with Gordon can be made via WriteRight@dundee.ac.uk or by phone on 01382 384308 or can be booked online at www.dundee.ac.uk/learning/centre/apply_right.htm

New Year brings new look skills unit

The new semester brought a new name and a new home for the University's team of Academic Skills Tutors, led by Dr Kathleen McMillan, Academic Skills Advisor.

Now part of the Division of Academic Affairs the team has been renamed the Academic Achievement Unit and has relocated from the ground floor of the Tower Building to the fifth and sixth floors.

The revamped unit has been tasked with organising and coordinating a more streamlined induction process for new students which will begin when their offer of acceptance and will continue throughout their first year of study.

Work has already begun on the new programme which will be known as Personal Learning for University Success at Dundee or PLUS@Dundee.

"The intention is to provide a coherent programme mix of learning events, social and sporting activities that will truly welcome students and quickly help them to feel at home in the city and on the campus," said Kathleen.

"The transition from one level to another within undergraduate programmes will be included in this process as well.

"In January, we began to implement this approach for taught postgraduate students who were welcomed into the University on a number of programmes. We began by producing an information newspaper entitled "Newline" which proved to be a popular contribution that offered a modest programme of activities that could enhance the initial events offered by schools.

"Of course, we're continuing to offer our usual services to support students in the development of their learning skills. We've had a very busy semester with an increase in the number of students seeking tutorials with our writing tutors as well as the launch of our new Count Me In programme of maths tutorials. We have also been going out to the Colleges and team-teaching with colleagues on writing technique and exam skills across all disciplines."

For more information about the new unit contact Dr McMillan at k.m.mcmillan@dundee.ac.uk

Appointments can be made by emailing: writing@dundee.ac.uk or countmein@dundee.ac.uk

For further information on PLUS@Dundee, please see the new developing site at www.dundee.ac.uk/plusatdundee/index.htm or contact Dr McMillan.

staff sports club @ ise
wednesdays • 5.30-6.30pm

at last! its here! your chance to try your hand at all sorts of sports - including badminton, indoor curling and volleyball. don't worry if you've never done them before - the idea is that you get to try something new whilst meeting new people - bonus!

on top of this we're having tasters in trampolining, archery, fencing, canoeing and more... followed by social stuff.

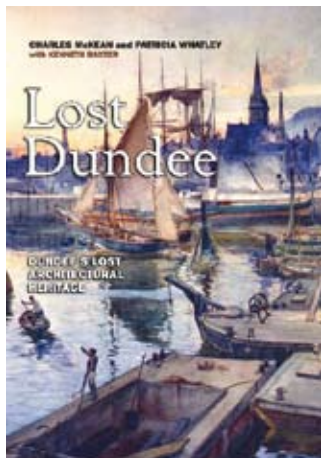
but... it's your club so you decide!

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Lost Dundee
Charles McKean and Patricia Whitley
Birlinn

Lost Dundee brings the second city of renaissance Scotland back to life showing, through previously undiscovered photographs and drawings, the life and the maritime quarter of this great port.

It illustrates Dundee's transformation into a major Georgian town at the centre of the flax trade between St Petersburg and the USA, with the development of major public buildings a result of the influx of wealth into the region.

The book goes on to examine Dundee's next transformation into the jute capital of the world. The final section illustrates the changes wrought in the twentieth century with the death of jute and its replacement as the city's major employer by tertiary education.

This book draws particularly upon the rich visual history sources of Charles Lawson's drawings of old Dundee in the Central Library, the DC Thomson photographic collection, and the University of Dundee Archives. Essential to the understanding of this constantly re-generating city, this book contains 150 drawings, photographs and plans of Dundee.

Charles McKean is Professor of Scottish Architectural History and one of Scotland's foremost authorities on Scotland's built environment.

Patricia Whitley is University Archivist and Head of Archive, Records Management and Museum Services as well as Director of the Centre for Archive and Information Studies.



Human Rights in the South Pacific: Challenges and Changes
Sue Farran
Routledge Cavendish

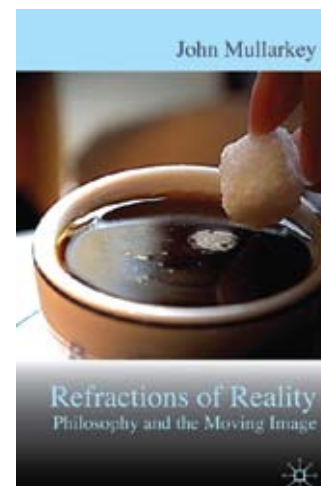
This book looks at the challenges and contemporary issues raised by human rights in the island countries of the South West Pacific.

Drawing on a wide range of resources to present a contemporary and evolving picture of human rights in the island states of the South Pacific region, the book considers the human rights aspects of constitutions, legal institutions and structures, social organisation, culture and custom, tradition and change.

The materials provide legal, historical, political, social and cultural insights into the lived experience of human rights in the region supported by illustrative material from case-law, media reports and policy documents.

The text will appeal to anyone interested in the region or in human rights including international rights advocates, investors and developers, policy makers, representatives of government and civic society and those wishing to acquire a better understanding of what countries emerging from colonial rule face in developing but still retaining their identity.

Sue Farran is a senior lecturer within the University's Law School. She was formerly an Associate Professor of Law at the University of the South Pacific where she is still a visiting lecturer.



Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image
John Mullarkey
Palgrave-Macmillan

Why is film becoming increasingly important to philosophers? Is it because it can be a helpful tool in teaching philosophy, in illustrating it? Or is it because film can also think for itself, because it can create its own philosophy?

Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image is the first book to examine all the central issues surrounding the vexed relationship between the film-image and philosophy tackling the work of particular philosophers as well as general philosophical positions

Described as a "ground-breaking book" by one critic it offers an incisive analysis and explanation of several prominent forms of film theorising that will prove immensely useful to anyone interested in the details of particular theories of film presently circulating, as well as correcting, revising, and re-visioning the field of film theory as a whole.

Dr John Mullarkey is a lecturer in philosophy within the School of Humanities.



Property Law Essentials
Duncan Spiers
Dundee University Press

This latest addition to DUP's popular law essentials series provides an invaluable text for students looking to gain a quick understanding of property law. Complete with useful summary sections of essential facts and essential cases it offers a clear and concise study and revision guide.

It is also an excellent resource for anyone needing to refresh their knowledge of property law with sections on the nature and classification of property, moveable property, land ownership and leases.

It also includes a table of cases and statutes.

DUP's Law Essentials series of concise study and revision guides is designed to provide a quick understanding of and time-saving revision guide to a range of Scottish law topics.

Topics covered so far include contract law, criminal law, delict, evidence, family law, revenue law, Scottish administrative law, Scottish legal system, public law and medical law.

Duncan Spiers is an advocate and lecturer in law at Napier University in Edinburgh.

New University librarian appointed



Dr Richard Parsons has been appointed Director of the University's newly formed Library and Learning Centre.

Dr Parsons was formerly acting Director of the Learning Centre prior to its merger with the Library.

His previous roles also include Director of eLearning and Coordinator of Learning Technologies.

Dr Parsons, who graduated in science from the University of Waikato in New Zealand and has a PhD from Australian National University, came to Dundee initially as a post-doctoral scientist and then lecturer in Life Sciences.

"The main library building with its new extension, café, research room and enhanced IT, is positioned perfectly on the main campus to be a central part of the University's operations," he said.

"We are increasing our consultation, enhancing our opening hours and improving the study environment as well as continuing to innovate our eLearning systems. We will continue to listen and be responsive and adaptable. The great strength of the Library and Learning Centre is the staff and we aim to provide the best possible support to students and staff and a diversity of expert services."

Life, Death and Art

Issues of life and death, including an intensely personal look at the process of assisted suicide, formed the basis of a powerful exhibition by artists Professor Tracey Mackenna and Edwin Jansenn at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design.

"LIFE IS OVER! If you want it" combined presentation, education, participation, debate and reflection on the themes of art, life and death.

Edwin's father Wim Janssen died as a result of assisted suicide at home in the Netherlands in 2000.

Speaking of his own experiences, Edwin, a lecturer in the School of Fine Art, said 'Dying is a complicated experience in many ways, but for my father this was a good way to go.'

'He was diagnosed with cancer and was given a prediction by doctors that he only had six months to live. That prediction turned out to be correct, but he took control of it towards the end of that period.'

'It was something that he had decided on years before, that this was the way he would like it to be. Before it could go ahead the entire family was consulted and the family doctor was also involved. But it was clear that this was something my father wanted.'

'In the event, the family all gathered around him, said our goodbyes, and he took a drink of the cocktail of drugs that would kill him. The family doctor was in the room throughout the whole time.'

'It was an experience that felt right, but I can't say it would be for everyone - everyone is different and every situation is different.'

Assisted suicide has been legal in the Netherlands for some years now.

Professor Mackenna, Associate Dean of Art in the School of Fine Art, explained that the exhibition touched on assisted suicide as part of a wider look at the many issues arising from death and how we deal with it.

'We were looking at how artists can deal with issues of life and death, how they interpret the experiences and emotions arising from it, and also how the debate over these issues is different from country to country, in our case explicitly the difference in approach between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom,' she said.

The exhibition, which was funded by the Wellcome Trust, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design Research and the University, included three new large-scale projections wall drawings from the couple's ongoing series The John and Yoko Drawings 2000 based on a poster made by John Lennon and Yoko Ono for their peace campaign in the 1970s.



Elusive element exhibition opens

A new exhibition celebrating the achievements of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) will be running at three locations across the University campus until the middle of March.



Elusive Element includes interactive media and artwork from a collaborative project working on 3D representations of cell structures developed by Dr Mhairi Towler at the College of Life Sciences and Janice Aitken from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design.

Dr Sandra Wilson, also from DoJ, will be exhibiting a number of pieces of jewellery inspired by 3D models of proteins, bringing forms familiar in science into the public domain.

Individually designed and crafted bespoke textile pieces by Jen Urch, and spectacular images of medicinal mushrooms by Claudia Wegner, will also be on display

The exhibition, which runs from 16 February to 14 March at the Lamb Gallery in the Tower Building, The Street in the Queen Mother Building and the Wellcome Building, forms part of the Women in STEM 2009 initiative. Organised by the University, Abertay and St Andrews Universities and the Scottish Crop Research Institute and Sensation the initiative also includes a public lecture by Professor Sue Black, Head of the Centre for Anatomy and Human Identification, in the Dalhousie Building on 23 February.

Portrait possibilities

More than 160 interpretations of self-portraiture will be on display in the Bradshaw Art Space in the Crawford Building at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design later this month.

The exhibits are a result of the annual General Foundation Course Self Portrait Project which has been running for more than three decades.

Each year students on the General Foundation Course are asked to create a self-portrait over the Christmas period. Their artwork is then collected and displayed alongside staff portraits in a special exhibition which has over the years highlighted a fascinating range of approaches to the classic artistic discipline.

The first year students will also be displaying their creativity and talent in other artistic disciplines at the General Foundation Showcase in the Matthew Building. Design, Fine Art and Media Art students have been working on a range of projects devoted to their individual specialisms.

Both exhibitions are free and run from Saturday 21 February to Friday 6 March 2009. For more information contact Exhibitions on 01382 385330 or via email at: exhibitions@dundee.ac.uk or visit the website at www.exhibitions.dundee.ac.uk



23 February
Forensic Anthropology -
No Job For a Woman
 Public Lecture, 6.30pm,
 The Dalhousie Building,
 Old Hawkhill.
 Professor Sue Black
 discusses the overwhelming
 predominance of women in the
 field of forensic anthropology
 in a public lecture held as part
 of the University's celebrations
 of Women in STEM (Science,
 Technology, Engineering
 and Maths).

Free tickets for the lecture are
 available at Tower Building
 reception, events@dundee.ac.uk
 or www.dundee.ac.uk/tickets
 under other free
 lectures section.

24 February
V&A public Lecture
 6pm, Dalhousie Building,
 Old Hawkhill.
 'A Cultural Accumulator',
 by the recently appointed
 Director of the BALTIC Centre
 for Contemporary Art in
 Gateshead, Godfrey Worsdale.
 Tickets for the public lecture
 are available from the
 University Online Store or by
 contacting the Events Office on
 01382 388046.

28 February
Garden Of Light
 The University Of Dundee
 Botanic Gardens will be
 transformed with a specially
 commissioned light and
 sound event.
 For one night only, visitors
 will be able to explore the
 garden trails as they've never
 been seen before. For more
 details see www.scotsm.co.uk.
 Contact the Botanic Garden for
 more information - tel: 01382
 381190

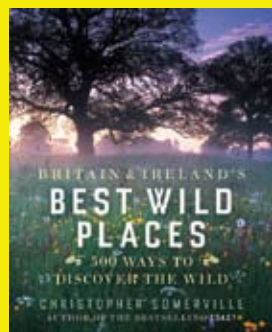
28 February
SELS 2009 Lecture
 Professor Anne Anderson -
 'Is Privacy Dead in the Digital Age?'
 6pm, Dalhousie Building, Old Hawkhill.
 The second Saturday Evening Lecture
 in the 85th anniversary series will see
 Professor Anderson, Vice-Principal and
 Head of the College of Art, Science and
 Engineering explore whether privacy is
 possible as access to new technologies
 increases. For more information on the
 full programme visit: www.dundee.ac.uk/externalrelations/events/sels/2009/sels2009.html



7 March
SELS 2009 Lecture
 Hugh Aldersley-Williams -
 'The mad science of media
 scare stories'. 6pm, Dalhousie
 Building, Old Hawkhill.
 From bird flu to melting
 icecaps, the media assails us
 with stories of our imminent
 destruction. Why do they do
 it to us, why do we lap it up,
 what harm - or good - does this
 do to society, and how can we
 learn to deal more rationally
 with the world of risk? In this
 lecture Hugh Aldersley-Williams
 will give insight into these
 issues. For more information
 on the full programme
 visit: www.dundee.ac.uk/externalrelations/events/sels/2009/sels2009.html

13 March
**Public Open Day, Clinical
 Research Centre Tayside**
 Doors Open from 10am - 4pm
 Clinical Research Centre,
 Ninewells Hospital & Medical
 School. The event is part of a
 national initiative taking place
 on 13 March 2009 in clinical
 research facilities throughout
 the UK. It is hoped that
 the venture will result in an
 increased public awareness
 of clinical research.
 For more information visit:
www.taysidecr.org.

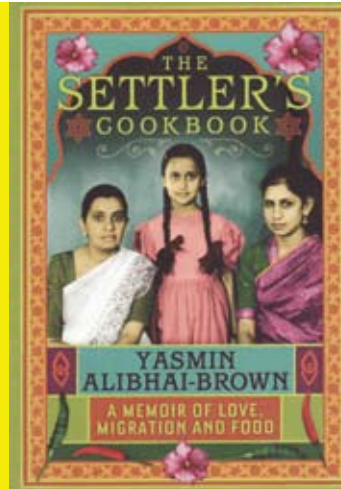
14 March
SELS 2009 Lecture
 Christopher Somerville -
 'Britain and Ireland's Wild
 Places, in Conversation
 with Julia Somerville'
 6pm, Dalhousie Building,
 Old Hawkhill.
 Christopher Somerville has
 spent twenty-five years walking
 the country lanes, back hills
 and wildernesses of Britain and
 Ireland. He is the author of
 Coast and Coast: The Journey
 Continues, which accompanied
 the BBC2 series and writes
 regularly for publications
 including the Daily Telegraph
 and Saga.
 In this lecture, the renowned
 broadcaster, (and Christopher's
 sister) Julia Somerville will
 interview Christopher about
 his experiences in Britain's
 Wilderness.
www.dundee.ac.uk/externalrelations/events/sels/2009/sels2009.html



18 March
Friends Winter Talk
 7pm Education Centre, Botanic
 Garden. Join the Friends of the
 Garden for their last winter
 talk. Guest speaker is
 Dr Paul Miller who will give
 a talk on the 'The Geography
 of Golf'. Tea/coffee will be
 provided after the talk.

19 March
The Dow Lecture
 Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell
 -'Tracking down killers in the
 brain: hot detective work or a
 stroke of luck?'
 6pm, Dalhousie Building, Old
 Hawkhill. Brain disease such as
 stroke, trauma, haemorrhage
 and Alzheimers are some of
 the greatest causes of death
 and disability in the Western
 world. This lecture will describe
 some recent discoveries about
 the causes of brain damage
 in these conditions and about
 possible new treatments.
 But it will also tell a few
 stories from "behind the
 scenes."
 Tickets will be available from
events@dundee.ac.uk or
 01382 385564.

4 April
SELS 2009 Lecture
 Yasmin Alibhai-Brown - The Settlers
 Cookbook: From India to Uganda to Britain,
 a personal history through food
 6pm, Dalhousie Building, Old Hawkhill.
 Discover how Shepherd's Pie is enhanced by
 sprinkling in some chilli, Victoria sponge can
 be wonderfully enlivened by saffron and lime
 juice, and the addition of ketchup to a curry
 can be life-changing.
 For more information on the full programme
 visit: www.dundee.ac.uk/externalrelations/events/sels/2009/sels2009.html



25 April
Family Fun Day
 10am to 4pm Botanic Garden
 Activities will include face painting, natural art,
 games arena, pot-a-plant, performances by
 DBS Productions theatre group, badge making,
 BG bush trials and BBQ at the Coffee Shop.
 Children under 12 must be accompanied
 by an adult.

25 April
SELS 2009 Lecture
 Charlie Cook - 'The New US Presidency - 100 Days after Inauguration'
 6pm, Dalhousie Building, Old Hawkhill.
 (In association with the Graduates' Council, Discovery Lecture).
 The political heavy weight will give a lecture assessing the US
 Presidential election campaign, the first 100 days in office of the new
 Presidency and what this means for America and the rest of the world.
 For more information on the full programme visit:
www.dundee.ac.uk/externalrelations/events/sels/2009/sels2009.html



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