Arches

The Global Impact Edition
Internationally recognised research, addressing real-world challenges.
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### Vice-Chancellor’s Foreword

Newcastle University is ambitious on a global scale. The quality of our research and teaching underpins that ambition. Our campuses in Singapore and Malaysia, and the strategic partnerships we have forged with institutions in China, Brazil, Angola and Indonesia, among others, are helping us to establish a presence around the world.

The opening of NUMed, our international branch campus for medicine and biomedical sciences in Malaysia, saw the beginning of a new chapter in Newcastle’s proud history of medical education. This June, the first cohort of medics will graduate from NUMed. You can read about this exciting next chapter in this issue of *Arches*.

Our commitment to tackling the big societal issues of the day is clear in our research, including projects addressing challenges such as water supply, human trafficking and cancer treatment, as well as others featured in our lead article on page 10.

Our students receive teaching of the highest quality in facilities that have had huge investment in recent years. Our graduates are among the most highly employable in the United Kingdom.

As the stories in these pages show, Newcastle’s vision of itself as a world-class civic university is more than a simple positioning device. It is based upon principles that can be found throughout our research and teaching.

We hope you enjoy reading about our work, and that you will want to celebrate the impact of your University.

Professor Chris Brink, Vice-Chancellor

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Two alumni share memories of their lifetime friendships forged at Newcastle University.

Arches chats to Newcastle University’s Dean of Singapore.

Find out how you can get involved and give something back.

Reviews of books from the alumni community.

A selection of popular stories from our alumni community from recent months.

Six decades apart, our medical students have a collective spirit.

Full steam ahead for this year’s annual reunion – and we want you to be a part of it!

Bigger than ever, a host of exclusive offers for Newcastle graduates, from Newcastle graduates.

Catch up with the latest news from old friends and fellow graduates.

From receptions to career events to golf, there is something for every member of our international alumni community.
Sugata’s School in the Cloud opens

When he won the 2013 TED Prize, Newcastle University’s Professor of Educational Technology Sugata Mitra talked about his plans to design a School in the Cloud, a learning lab where children can explore and learn from each other by tapping into online resources.

Schools in the Cloud is the culmination of over a decade of research and observations from all over the world. From his earliest experiments while working at NIIT in Delhi with the Hole in the Wall project, which inspired the film Slumdog Millionaire, through to setting up the original SOLEs in India, Professor Mitra discovered that children’s innate sense of learning is magnified when they are given the freedom to explore the Internet in small groups.

And now, five of the seven new Self Organised Learning Environments (SOLEs) have opened, both in India and the North East of England. These SOLEs belong to the children – it’s their School in the Cloud, a place where they can learn on their own and teach each other, using resources from the worldwide cloud without supervision or formal teaching.

This project builds upon the successful Granny Cloud, which was set up in 2009 after a plea for retired teachers in the UK to come forward who were willing to interact with children in India via Skype.

‘The School in the Cloud is learning at the edge of chaos,’ explains Professor Mitra. ‘Our hope is for children to be prepared for the future because they are confident and curious problem solvers who, by tapping into global networks, can work together to use technology and find solutions to ‘big’ questions.’

Gene mutation for excessive alcohol drinking found

Researchers have discovered a gene that regulates alcohol consumption which when faulty can cause excessive drinking. They have also identified the mechanism underlying this phenomenon.

The study showed that normal mice show no interest in alcohol and drink little or no alcohol when offered a free choice between a bottle of water and a bottle of diluted alcohol.

However, mice with a genetic mutation to the gene Gabrb1 overwhelmingly preferred drinking alcohol over water, choosing to consume almost 85% of their daily fluid as drinks containing alcohol – about the strength of wine.

The consortium of researchers from five UK universities – Newcastle University, Imperial College London, Sussex University, University College London and University of Dundee – and the MRC Mammalian Genetics Unit at Harwell, funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC), Wellcome Trust and ERAB, published their findings in Nature Communications.

Dr Quentin Anstee, Consultant Hepatologist at Newcastle University, joint lead author said, ‘It’s amazing to think that a small change in the code for just one gene can have such profound effects on complex behaviours like alcohol consumption.

‘We are continuing our work to establish whether the gene has a similar influence in humans, though we know that in people alcoholism is much more complicated as environmental factors come into play. But there is the real potential for this to guide development of better treatments for alcoholism in the future.’
‘Natural’ engineering offers solution against future flooding

Back-to-nature flood schemes which use the land’s natural defences to slow river flow and reduce flooding could be a cost-effective way of tackling one of the biggest problems facing the UK today.

The schemes – which include capturing flow upstream to prevent floods downstream where they are likely to have a greater impact on infrastructure and homes – have been trialled as part of a five-year research project by experts from Newcastle University in partnership with the Environment Agency.

Using Belford Burn in Northumberland as a demonstration, the team have shown that by changing and hindering the natural flow pathways within a small catchment system, it is possible to manage the amount of run-off from the land. This reduces the risk of flooding in low-lying areas and also cuts down on pollution by preventing phosphorous and nitrates from being washed off the land.

Published in the academic journal Science of the Total Environment, the findings were presented earlier this year at the House of Commons Office of Science and Technology to inform the Government’s Environment White Paper.

Dr Paul Quinn, based in the School of Civil Engineering and Geosciences at Newcastle University, said, ‘Climate projections for the UK suggest that total rainfall during winter months will continue to rise and with it the risk of flooding.

‘What we have shown at Belford is that by employing so-called ‘soft engineering solutions’ to restrict the progress of water through a catchment – disconnecting fast-flow pathways and adding storage – we have been able to reduce the risk of flooding in the lower areas and, most importantly, in the town.

‘Belford is not unique and there are many other areas around the UK where these solutions could make a significant impact and potentially protect peoples’ homes.’

The sting in the tail: Chance finding could lead to new antibiotics

A whole new class of antibiotics could be possible after a chance discovery by academics at Newcastle University.

In a paper published in the journal Molecular Microbiology, scientists from the University describe how they were studying a protein derived from E.coli bacteria, called Colicin N, which kills competing bacteria in a very efficient way. Just one molecule of this protein can kill a whole cell.

As part of their investigations, researchers divided the protein into three parts: a receptor, which helps the protein lock-on to the bacteria; a toxic part that punches holes in the membrane of the bacteria to kill it; and a ‘tail-like’ part. The ‘tail’ was thought to help the protein sneak into the cell but assumed to be harmless to the bacteria itself.

They wanted to see what effect each part of the protein would have on E.coli bacteria. Amazingly when they introduced the translocation ‘tail’ into the environment of the bacteria, it killed them.

The discovery, that such a simple part of a protein can kill a bacteria, could mean that new antibiotics derived from this part could be developed. One of the existing stumbling blocks to the development of new protein based antibiotics is their complicated structure.

But the research, which was funded by the Wellcome Trust, is still in its early days. Professor of Structural Biochemistry at Newcastle University’s Centre for Bacterial Cell Biology, Jeremy Lakey, who leads the research team that made the breakthrough, said, ‘It’s an early stage basic discovery and it kills bacteria by a new and as yet unknown mechanism, so we need to do a lot more work to discover exactly what is happening here and whether it could be used for new drugs. But it is unlike anything I have seen before and one of the most exciting things I have seen in 30 years research on antibacterials.’
What lies beneath – scientists discover giant trench under Antarctic ice

A massive ancient subglacial trough – deeper than the Grand Canyon has been discovered by a team of UK experts.

The research involved scientists from Newcastle University and colleagues from other universities and institutions. They charted the Ellsworth Subglacial Highlands – an ancient mountain range buried beneath several kilometres of Antarctic ice – by combining data from satellites and ice-penetrating radars towed behind skidoos and on-board small aircraft.

The researchers spent three seasons investigating and mapping the region in West Antarctica, uncovering a massive subglacial valley up to three kilometres deep, more than 300 kilometres long and up to 25 kilometres across. In places, the floor of this valley is more than 2,000 metres below sea level.

The mountain range and deep valley were carved millions of years ago by a small icefield similar to those of the present-day Antarctic Peninsula, or those of Arctic Canada and Alaska.

The team’s analysis has provided an unprecedented insight into the extent, thickness and behaviour of this ancient icefield, and the configuration and behaviour of the early West Antarctic Ice Sheet. The subglacial landscape shows where and how the West Antarctic Ice Sheet originated and grew. It also provides important clues about the size and shape of the ice sheet in West Antarctica in a warmer global climate.

The findings were published in the Geological Society of America Bulletin. The paper’s lead author Dr Neil Ross from Newcastle University said, ‘The discovery of this huge trough, and the characterisation of the surrounding mountainous landscape, was incredibly serendipitous. We had acquired ice penetrating radar data from both ends of this huge hidden valley, but we had no information to tell us what was in between. Satellite data was used to fill the gap, because despite being covered beneath several kilometres of ice, the valley is so vast that it can be seen from space.’

Parkinson’s discovery could lead to earlier diagnosis

A new study could help earlier diagnosis of Parkinson’s disease, after Newcastle University researchers identified that even early in the disease people experience symptoms.

While movement – motor – problems are the main symptom of Parkinson’s disease, non-motor problems such as drooling, anxiety and bowel problems affect a large number of patients and begin sooner than previously thought. Earlier diagnosis could lead to earlier treatment and therefore allow patients to have a better quality of life.

In the study, published in the journal Neurology, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology, researchers from Newcastle University compared 159 people with newly-diagnosed Parkinson’s disease to 99 people of similar ages who did not have the disease. Participants were asked whether they experienced any of the 30 non-motor symptoms screened for, including sexual problems, sleep problems and gastrointestinal problems.

The people with Parkinson’s disease had an average of eight of the non-motor problems, compared to three non-motor symptoms for the people who did not have the disease. Among the most common symptoms for those with Parkinson’s disease included drooling, urinary urgency, constipation, anxiety and a reduced sense of smell. These were all significantly more common in people with Parkinson’s disease than in those without the disease.

Study author Dr Tien K. Khoo said, ‘These results show that Parkinson’s affects many systems in the body, even in its earliest stages. Often these symptoms affect people’s quality of life just as much if not more than the movement problems that come with the disease. Both doctors and patients need to bring these symptoms up and consider available treatments.’
Newcastle to lead £10m research project into sustainable farming

A consortium led by Newcastle University has been awarded the largest ever EU grant in animal health to explore new ways to ensure the sustainability of modern animal production.

With broad expertise and geographic representation, the consortium is ideally positioned to address the scientific challenges involved, derive meaningful epidemiological data, evaluate test interventions across diverse real-world systems, and propagate outcomes.

Launched at Newcastle University, the project focuses on exploring ways to increase production quality, limiting environmental impact and preserving profitability for the farmers, and those who live from animal food production.

The PROHEALTH (PROduction HEALTH – Sustainable intensive pig and poultry production) consortium brings together ten academic partners, one European association, four industry partners, and seven SMEs with expertise in veterinary science and epidemiology, animal physiology and immunology, socioeconomics, genetics and nutrition, as well as the welfare and production science of pigs and poultry.

NEWS
IN BRIEF

- The outstanding achievements of two Folk Music graduates over the past year have been recognised at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. Bella Hardy (MMus Master of Music 2007) won Singer of the Year in the ceremony held at London’s Royal Albert Hall; while Fay Hield’s (BMus Folk & Traditional Music 2005) group, The Full English, scooped both best band and best album. Nancy Kerr, a fiddle tutor on the Folk and Traditional music programme also plays in the group. Fay was also nominated for Singer of the Year. Also nominated for Musician of the Year was another folk graduate, harmonist Will Pound (HE Diploma Folk & Traditional Music 2009).

- A pioneering research centre to train the next generation of digital economy researchers is being launched. Led by Newcastle University and involving policy makers, the private and public sectors and researchers from across the globe, the Centre for Doctoral Training in Digital Civics will provide a unique opportunity to investigate how digital technology can be used in the design of local government services to better meet the needs of the communities they serve. Funded by EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council), the Centre will train PhD students, exploring how digital technologies can be used to promote public participation in the design and delivery of local services.

- Bloodaxe Books return to Newcastle University. From such humble beginnings, Bloodaxe Books gave a voice and in many cases a break, to leading writers and major figures in world poetry. Now, three and half decades later the University has acquired its archive and Bloodaxe Books is returning to the place where it all began, thanks to editor and former University student Dr Neil Astley (BA English Literature 1978, Hon DLitt 1996). It will take archivists up to two years to catalogue it and the collection is a ‘living archive’ which means the University will receive a new section of the archive each year, for as long as Bloodaxe continues to publish. For further information about Special Collections, please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/library/special-collections.
How did early primordial cells evolve?

Research into bacteria without a cell wall is helping us understand how the earliest forms of life may have replicated nearly four billion years ago.

Four billion years ago, soon after the planet cooled enough for life to begin, primordial cells may have replicated and divided without protein machinery or cell walls, relying instead on just a flimsy lipid membrane. New research on bacteria examines exactly how these primitive cells could have evolved without such crucial structures. While the vast majority of bacteria have cell walls, many bacteria can switch to a wall-free existence called the L-form state, which could mirror the structure of primordial cells.

A study published by Cell Press in the journal Cell reveals how bacteria in this L-form state divide and proliferate, shedding light on how the earliest forms of cellular life may have replicated.

‘The main surprise for me was how simple the mechanism was. It doesn’t require any sophisticated protein-based machinery,’ says senior study author Professor Jeff Errington of Newcastle University. ‘This makes it plausible as an explanation for how very primitive cells could have proliferated in the very early days of evolution.’

The cell wall is a layered structure surrounding cells that protects them and maintains their shape. It is present in all known major bacterial lineages, and it was also probably present in the last common ancestor of bacteria. This structure is so important that it is targeted by antibiotics, and many bacteria responsible for infectious diseases can switch to the L-form state to resist antibiotics.

Driving and distracted

Trying to process complicated information while driving – such as taking work calls – significantly reduces our ability to drive safely, new research has shown.

Previous research has shown that drivers talking on hands-free have slower reactions than motorists who are just over the drink-drive limit.

Now transport experts from Newcastle University have shown the level of distraction depends on the intensity of the conversation and that trying to process complicated information, such as dealing with work-related calls, has the biggest impact on our reactions.

The work, carried out by researchers Alyxandra Petre and Dr Amy Guo, mapped response times against heart rate and eye-tracking data, speed maintenance and steering performance in the University’s DriveLab simulator.

Presenting their findings during the BRAKE National Road Safety Week, the findings support new data released by the road safety charity that more than half a million UK drivers (575,000) have points on their licence for using their mobile phone at the wheel or being otherwise distracted.

Previous work by the UK’s Transport Research Laboratory found that drivers talking on a hands-free set reacted more slowly than those who were just over the drink-driving limit and it has been estimated that up to a third of all road traffic accidents involve somebody who is at work at the time.

The research is part of a wider programme of work being carried out by the Newcastle team looking at driver behaviour and intelligent transport systems, including navigation systems to support older drivers and in-car communication technology to improve driver efficiency and safety.
The spread of antibiotic-resistance to one of the most pristine locations in Asia is linked to the annual human pilgrimages to the region, new research has shown.

Experts from Newcastle University and the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi (IIT-Delhi), sampled water and sediments at seven sites along the Upper Ganges River, in the foothills of the Himalayas.

They found that in May and June, when hundreds of thousands of visitors travel to Rishikesh and Haridwar to visit sacred sites, levels of resistance genes that lead to “superbugs” were found to be about 60 times greater than other times of the year.

Publishing their findings in the journal Environmental Science and Technology, the team say it is important to protect people visiting and living at these sites while also making sure nothing interferes with these important religious practices.

They argue that preventing the spread of resistance genes that promote life-threatening bacteria could be achieved by improving waste management at key pilgrimage sites.

Professor David Graham, an environmental engineer based at Newcastle University who has spent over 10 years studying the environmental transmission of antibiotic resistance around the world, said, “We studied pilgrimage areas because we suspected such locations would provide new information about resistance transmission via the environment. And it has – temporary visitors from outside the region overload local waste handling systems, which seasonally reduces water quality at the normally pristine sites.

‘The specific resistance gene we studied, called blaNDM-1, causes extreme multi-resistance in many bacteria, therefore we must understand how this gene spreads in the environment.

‘If we can stem the spread of such antibiotic resistant genes locally – possibly through improved sanitation and waste treatment - we have a better chance of limiting their spread on larger scales, creating global solutions by solving local problems.’

NEWS
IN BRIEF

■ Bicycle theft can be significantly reduced simply by placing pictures of staring eyes above bike racks, researchers at Newcastle University have found. In a two year experiment on the university campus, the academics managed to reduce thefts from the racks with the eye pictures, combined with a short anti-theft message, by 62%. The findings have already led to changes on the Newcastle University campus and the team are working with police across the country to advise them on how they may be able to use the research.

■ Faye Green (BA Fine Art 2013) beat off competition from more than 1,600 entries to win the Converse/Dazed Emerging Artists Award. Performance artist Faye, said, ‘My piece, NOT TO DISCOU(RAGE) YOU is spoken word and dance. It was a really nerve wracking moment when I had to perform, I am so thrilled to be chosen as the winner, it’s crazy. It was really exciting as I have never shown my work outside of Newcastle before. It’s all a bit of a blur to be honest. The judges said they really enjoyed the rebelliousness of my piece.’
Research for the world

Research carried out by Newcastle University is highlighted and celebrated in a new campaign focusing on the impact of a world-class civic university. Laura White takes a look at how our academics are making a difference to the world we live in today and the challenges we face tomorrow.

From ‘smart’ cancer drugs to Smart Grids for energy storage, Newcastle University academics are making an impact around the world in areas as diverse as health, the environment and engineering.

A new international research impact campaign recently launched by the University draws attention to the critical work of these researchers and demonstrates how they are tackling the major challenges facing modern society.

Featuring a series of case studies from across the faculties, the campaign showcases work in a number of academic disciplines where Newcastle University’s expertise is world-renowned.

Abi Kelly, Director of Public Relations, explains, ‘As a civic university, our research is sharply focused on addressing the big issues facing the world today. Our academics are responding to the most pressing needs and demands of civil society and have an outstanding reputation for having international impact.

‘This campaign throws a spotlight on their success and demonstrates the extent of Newcastle University’s international reach. Raising the profile of our global research impact will ensure we continue to attract the best quality students, staff and collaborations.’

Here is a selection of stories from the campaign.

Get Involved

Visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/impact to see the stories brought to life through videos and images
Join in the conversation on Twitter from @UniofNewcastle using the hashtag #impactNCL
Follow the International Research Impact Showcase page on Newcastle University’s LinkedIn profile page

Improving life after liver disease

The University’s team of world-leading hepatologists has established a new safe and reliable non-invasive diagnostic technique for non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, a form of liver disease that is rapidly becoming commonplace in the Western world. This avoids a liver biopsy – an expensive, invasive and sometimes painful procedure that can be unreliable and has occasionally been associated with the death of some patients.

The University has also contributed to an exciting study that has identified a gene responsible for regulating alcohol consumption and which, when faulty, can cause excessive drinking. Researchers believe there is potential for this to guide development of better treatments for alcoholism in the future.

Electrical engineering

Powering Smart Grids of the future

Experts in energy at the University are leading the UK’s largest £54m Smart Grid project, and at Science Central – Newcastle’s major new city centre science and technology site – they are developing a test bed that could pave the way for the future of energy storage.
Cleaning up mine water pollution
A team of civil engineering experts is helping to tackle the global problem of water pollution caused by mining. This work includes the trialling of a system to remove metal from water without the need for energy or chemicals.

The ‘vertical flow pond’ in the Lake District National Park has been designed in collaboration with the Coal Authority, National Trust and Environment Agency, and funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The method could pave the way for cleaning up hundreds of abandoned metal mines across England and potentially the world.

Rebuilding lives after human trafficking
Pioneering work by geographers and sociologists at Newcastle University is helping women and children in Nepal put the horrors of human trafficking behind them, build new lives and change public perceptions about survivors of trafficking.

After escaping their ordeal, survivors of human trafficking often face extreme challenges in accessing citizenship and establishing new livelihoods – and until now their voices have not been heard. This major Newcastle University research project was one of the first in the world to systematically analyse women’s experiences after they have been trafficked.

Tackling dementia
Dementia devastates the lives of 36 million people worldwide and costs $315b in healthcare. Professor Ian McKeith (pictured) leads research which resulted in the first diagnosis and treatment of dementia with Lewy bodies, a condition which is now known to be the second most frequent cause of degenerative dementia.

Little more than a decade ago the disease was relatively unknown and those affected by it were often treated with drugs that could worsen their unpleasant symptoms or even prove fatal.

Protecting against mitochondrial disease
Every year, around one in 6,500 children are born with severe mitochondrial diseases which include muscular weakness, blindness, heart failure, liver failure, learning disability and diabetes, which can lead to death in early infancy.

Newcastle University is developing a pioneering IVF (in vitro fertilisation) technique to protect future generations from the risk of mitochondrial diseases, which are passed from mother to child down the maternal line. The Wellcome Trust Centre for Mitochondrial Research at the University is integrating international quality research with training for new scientists and engaging with policy makers, patients and the public.

Pioneering ‘smart’ cancer drugs
Newcastle University has been at the forefront of the development of ‘smart’ cancer drugs known as PARP inhibitors. Continued research, initiated in Newcastle in the 1990s, has not only led to the first drug of its kind being developed and trialled in Newcastle but has also heralded a new era in cancer treatment.

Opening up untapped oil reserves
Professors Ian Head and Steve Larter led research that has overturned decades of conventional wisdom in the oil industry, and has had significant practical implications for oil production, including a whole new approach to the placement of oil wells.

Educating the world’s poorest children
Education in some of the world’s poorest and hardest to reach places has been dramatically improved as a result of research into low-cost private schools led by Professor James Tooley and Dr Pauline Dixon (pictured) of Newcastle University.

Fighting poverty with arts and culture
A cultural development programme that has grown out of research by the University’s International Centre for Music Studies, has helped establish 19 training programmes in South Africa and Zimbabwe, which prepare some 750 women and young people for employment within the cultural sector.
The Disney secret to international success

Andy Bird CBE, Chairman of Walt Disney International, is responsible for Disney’s businesses outside of the United States.
For over a decade, Andy Bird has been responsible for Disney’s businesses outside of the United States. With a responsibility to increase brand affinity and opportunities in key international markets, it’s an enormous task. David-John Mather chats to Andy Bird CBE (BA English Language 1985) about the challenges of these emerging markets and the company’s plans for the future.

From films to toys and theme parks to interactive entertainment, Walt Disney is a world leader in family entertainment and media enterprise. Walk down any high street and you can be sure to find numerous stores stocking a vast array of Disney products. Named by Yahoo Finance as Company of the Year 2013, last year saw the company celebrate its 90th anniversary.

At a time when many global businesses are still plagued by financial uncertainties following the global recession, Disney achieved record revenue of $45b last year. ‘We’ve been able to weather the economic downturn internationally quite well,’ explains Andy. ‘We’re very fortunate to be a company that has some very strong brands, with great businesses and products.’

Part of Andy’s challenge – and indeed success – in his role as Chairman of Walt Disney International is the aptitude to recognise and understand differences between each of Disney’s key international markets. Through understanding and treating each market individually, new areas of opportunity are constantly being identified despite the international economic slowdown.

Recently published figures have highlighted Disney’s success in overseas territories. In 2013, Disney Studios domestic revenue in the United States totalled $1.72b. Internationally however, revenue exceeded $3.01b. ‘In some markets, particularly the emerging markets, the economies slowed down but they still continue to grow,’ Andy explains. ‘In China, for example, there is still so much organic growth within the media industry that even in the economy’s downturn you still see good growth.’

Through recognising each area of growth, Disney International’s strategies are as diverse as each market. ‘Each country has its own challenges, whether in terms of infrastructure, overall development, regulation or technology,’ explains Andy. Equally, Disney has numerous business segments and holdings which in turn present their own prospects. In addition to its consumer products and resorts, Disney continues to expand its portfolio of media and broadcasting networks. In the United States, Disney’s media networks comprise the Disney/ABC Television Group and ESPN Inc. Even during the recession, the profits for these networks continued to increase steadily.

Internationally, Walt Disney is continuing to expand and develop new networks in emerging markets. ‘It’s very important to recognise the local nuances and consumer habits and cultures in all of these different countries we do business in,’ explains Andy. ‘Our approach is to treat each market individually and design our business strategy around the market conditions and the market development of each country. We design a strategy to really make sure we’re relevant to consumers in each of these markets.’

Since 2004, Andy has overseen the company’s acquisition of Hungama TV in India and preceding investment in India’s UTV. The acquisition and investment has played a key role in Disney’s transformation into a global enterprise. As part of a diversification strategy, Andy has ensured that the company continues to grow organically. ‘Our challenge was how to create, how to do business and how to present the product,’ says Andy. Replacing Walt Disney Company India, Disney has instead created the Indian Walt Disney Company. In doing so, Disney now produces more local content rather than pushing product created primarily for the US.

‘Our approach is to treat each market individually and design our business strategy around the market conditions and the market development of each country.’

Andy Bird CBE
Andy further expands on the reorganisation and intentions behind the changes: ‘We restructured the way we organised our business to make it more horizontally managed. We gave authority and autonomy to individuals in the markets to develop their own strategies. You can’t have a one-size-fits-all strategy, so we hire local people to run and work for our businesses.’

‘It’s not only India where restructuring has taken place. Similarly, we created the Chinese Walt Disney Company. We have some businesses that are unique to China, that serve the Chinese,’ says Andy. ‘If you think about just these markets, what we do in India is going to be very different to what we do in China. India is all about the movies and Bollywood, so we have a very strong media presence, whereas China is more retail and theme parks.’

Mindful of consumer habits, technological advances and existing networks, Andy’s teams must also recognise local regulations. ‘In China, the media business is heavily regulated in terms of what you can do,’ explains Andy, referring to foreign animation being banned from prime-time broadcasting in order to nurture domestic animation production. ‘It’s really about embracing the cultures and the evolutionary stage each market is at.’

Regardless of Disney’s successes and ever-expanding operations, Andy still remains mindful that Disney always has competition and the competition is always very good. In order to remain ahead of the competition and maintain Disney’s position as a world leader, Andy outlines the company’s two key focuses. ‘One is creative excellence, differentiating you in the market place,’ he advises. ‘I think we have a very high bar in terms of creativity and creative excellence. The other is making sure we engage with technology, particularly in what we observe today – such as the transformation around mobile, smartphones and tablets.’

Towards the end of last year, Disney began debuting shows on mobile platforms, ahead of their television debuts. ‘It’s very important – and not just in emerging markets – that we have a clear strategy. Mobiles and tablets have transformed consumer habits within the last three years. Mobile is very important and is going to become more important,’ says Andy.

The continuing rollout of new mobile games and apps is a further demonstration of Disney’s ambitions to capitalise on this ever-expanding market. ‘If you have a smartphone or tablet, it enables you to do so much more without having to sit at the computer,’ Andy explains.

‘In India, most households may only have one television set, so the tablet brings so much opportunity into the home as a second screen. This is a great opportunity for a company such as ours. What is important is that we are at the forefront in what we’re doing with technology and we’ve got to make sure that it seamlessly interacts with everything else we are doing.’

Undoubtedly, the availability of mobiles and tablets is changing the way people consume their media and information. ‘There is the ability to ‘snack’ with media and entertainment on these devices, whether it’s a clip on YouTube, or something that’s posted on a social network like Vine, Twitter or Facebook,’ describes Andy. ‘It’s really important that we are engaged there; there are many opportunities.’

Will the increase in mobile consumption have an impact upon other media forms? ‘It doesn’t mean television and movie programmes are going to go away,’ Andy responds. ‘It gives you other opportunities to add to your portfolio of products and businesses that you create. Certainly, however, there’ll be an increased focus on mobile and digital,’ Andy concludes. ‘We already have a Disney mobile service in Japan which is very successful. You can buy a Disney branded phone with a whole host of features and content on it, it’s been incredibly successful.’

In January this year, Andy celebrated a decade of working for Walt Disney International. Looking to the future, he is aware of the upcoming challenges and opportunities. ‘If we were having this conversation five years ago, we wouldn’t be talking about tablets. If you go back 10 years, we wouldn’t be talking about Facebook,’ he says. ‘Disney has always been an innovative company. We spend a lot of time in imagining, we create and patent and invent a lot of things. We must continue to do that and remain relevant and up to date as new technologies are invented. There are going to be a lot of things that haven’t been invented yet that are going to come along and take the world by storm.’

Disney Studios, Burbank, California. In 2013, Disney Studios domestic revenue in the United States totalled $1.72b. Internationally however, revenue exceeded $3.01b. (Photo credit: The Walt Disney Company)
The Vice-Chancellor of Newcastle University, Professor Chris Brink, and representatives from the University’s Centre for Rural Economy (CRE) attended a ceremony at Buckingham Palace to be awarded a Queen’s Anniversary Prize.

Royal recognition for rural research

Newcastle University’s Centre for Rural Economy (CRE) recently celebrated its 21st anniversary with the award of a Queen’s Anniversary Prize. The award, given in recognition of CRE’s research into rural economies and societies, was presented to Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Brink, and representatives from CRE at a ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

For the past 21 years, CRE has led studies of some of the world’s most pressing challenges, from how we use land and natural resources, to the changing relationships between rural and urban communities and how we tackle rural social exclusion.

The Centre has played a significant role in shaping the infrastructure for rural policy in the UK, including the establishment of Defra, the Commission for Rural Communities and several rural white papers. In Europe, CRE had a major impact on the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy.

CRE was founded in 1992 through a public appeal in memory of the 10th Duke of Northumberland, a man with a lifelong interest in and influence over agriculture and rural affairs and the first Chancellor of Newcastle University. A committee of volunteers raised £1m to establish the Centre. It was this independence from government funding which allowed the CRE research team to scrutinise, question and advise on some of the biggest issues facing rural communities both in the UK and around the world.

Rural issues are still of the utmost importance, as recent public debates on badger culls, healthy and sustainable food production, affordable housing and rural broadband show. It is vital that these debates are evidence-led, and the Centre for Rural Economy is committed to developing the knowledge and insight to ensure this is the case, working closely with rural communities and businesses to ensure that research is as grounded and useful as possible.

Guy Garrod, Director of the Centre for Rural Economy, said, ‘Since its creation in 1992 the Centre for Rural Economy has updated the picture of rural economies and societies. We have led the way in changing the image of the ‘rural’ away from something that has not moved with the times into that which has its own rich sources of dynamism beyond agricultural development.

‘It’s fantastic to mark our 21st anniversary with a Queen’s Anniversary Prize. Hopefully the next 21 years will see us build on our success and continue to explore key themes affecting rural economies and societies, including rural resilience to economic crisis, food security issues and democratic and participative models of rural development.’

Queen’s Anniversary Prizes are awarded by the Royal Anniversary Trust to honour work of outstanding importance and quality in higher and further education in the UK. This is the third occasion on which Newcastle University has been awarded a Queen’s Anniversary Prize. Previously the University gained the Prize in 2005 for its innovative solutions to mine water pollution, and again in 2009 for research into ageing.

For further information about the Centre for Rural Economy, please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/cre

To celebrate the 21st anniversary of CRE, in November 2013 the University launched a new appeal with a £2.5m target. Your donations will help us to ensure that CRE can continue to build upon its success, carrying out world-leading research that will shape the future of rural communities for many more years to come.

For further information or to make a donation to the appeal, please contact the office (our contact details can be found on page two).
I Am Nasrine is a coming-of-age story set against the modern refugee experience. Since its release, it has picked up a Brooklyn Film Festival award and earned BAFTA and BIFA nominations for writer, producer and director, Tina Gharavi. David-John Mather chats to Tina (Senior Lecturer in the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics) about the film’s production, its themes and audience response.

TEHRAN TO TYNESIDE: ‘Film is fantastic when it can translate and it can travel’

I Am Nasrine, set in modern-day Tehran and on Tyneside, tells an intimate journey of self-discovery. The film follows the paths of teenage siblings, Nasrine and Ali. Following her father’s bidding after a run-in with the Iranian police, Iranian-born Nasrine sets out for the UK with her watchful brother, Ali. Although Nasrine is embarking on a reluctant exile, she is excited by the prospect of a new life and her newfound freedoms.

However, upon arriving in Britain, Nasrine and Ali quickly face uncertainty, ultimately finding friends in the traveller community. The film finds both siblings becoming increasingly isolated, eventually hostility and prejudice culminate in tragedy.

Since its release, the film has received considerable acclaim from both critics and industry figureheads alike. Sir Ben Kingsley, a patron of the project, declared the film ‘important and much needed.’

While critical acclaim is very welcome, Tina finds herself continually intrigued and humbled by the feedback she receives. ‘For certain people it really touches something,’ she explains. ‘As a filmmaker that’s the most you can hope for, that you connect with people and that you help them feel something profound.’
At a young age, Tina moved to England from Tehran, before spending considerable time living in France, New Zealand and the USA. As a result, Tina’s own identity and recollections of travelling have found their way onto the screen.

‘When I wrote the earlier drafts the characters seemed very flat,’ says Tina. ‘They didn’t really have the nuances that perhaps the script does now. Though I was struggling, I realised I needed to look into myself.’

The development of I Am Nasrine began back in 2001, over 13 years ago. The film's development is fascinating in that Tina worked directly with asylum seekers and refugees on various projects and training workshops to help them tell their own stories. This in turn would also influence the film's script.

‘The film isn’t any one person’s story; there have been a lot of different people who have influenced this story,’ says Tina. ‘I think that’s what’s interesting about it – it has that community engagement work at the heart of it.’

The film’s release and success came at a time when UK mainstream media often features damaging and conflicting reports about migrants. The negativity around the subject was certainly something Tina wanted to challenge in this film, which would be her first feature. ‘The film is a way of quietly undermining that, by making the characters human and letting people see into their eyes to empathise with them and their situation,’ she explains.

Tina views the task as being vital in order to challenge the media’s negative connotations. ‘That’s all I can do,’ she says. ‘I’m not a politician, I don’t write rhetoric or debate, so what I do is make art. I make film that responds to situations and hopefully offers an alternative viewpoint.’

Although the film centres on Nasrine’s story in the North East, a portion of the film was shot in Iran. Filming took place at the same time as protesters were demanding President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad be removed from office. ‘Working in Iran certainly presented us with challenges,’ Tina recalls.

Due to the film’s content and nature, scenes in Iran were shot in secret and Tina’s Iranian crew remain uncredited on the film. During one police visit to the set, an assistant director stepped in to take the lead, while Tina had no option but to act as an on-looker. In a heart-stopping moment at airport customs, the Iranian shot footage was smuggled out of the country on a hard drive carried in Tina’s handbag. However, despite this tension, there are only fond memories of the shoot.

‘Strangely enough, as dangerous as it was, we had a wonderful time working together,’ says Tina. ‘We worked as a covert film unit and we had a remarkable team of people that really believed in what we were doing and worked incredibly hard.’

Throughout the film Nasrine’s brother, Ali, struggles to come to terms with both the reality of his new life and his awakening sexuality. This particular subplot would end up giving Tina great difficulty when it came to promoting the film in a number of overseas territories.

‘I’m not a politician, I don’t write rhetoric or debate, so what I do is make art. I make film that responds to situations and hopefully offers an alternative viewpoint.’

Tina Charavi

‘We could not get into any Middle Eastern film festival,’ Tina states. ‘Because there are homosexual references in the film it was rejected by the Dubai International Film Festival. They wrote to us to say they loved the film, but couldn’t show it because of “the situation” – without saying exactly what “the situation” was.’

Despite the struggle in obtaining overseas screenings, Tina was nevertheless successful with a showing in Sudan. However, prior to the screening, she was approached to ask if a gay kiss could be removed from the film. This request faced Tina with a decision whether or not to edit the film for the Sudanese audience. She ultimately decided to simply black out the kiss on the screen, something which would give it greater impact. ‘I realised this was an opportunity and, since the film had more to offer, blacking out the kiss made it even more powerful,’ she explains.

Despite the blacking out, Tina was glad she took the decision to screen the film in Sudan. ‘A lot of people in Sudan said “this is our story”, which is amazing as I can’t think of anywhere as far away from the North East as Sudan. There was immediate identification with the storyline,’ says Tina. ‘Film is fantastic when it can translate and it can travel like that.’

As the film progresses, Nasrine must find a strength and belief that hope alone can be a guiding light through the darkest of times. Although the film has serious content at its heart, audiences have been pleasantly surprised by how humane and affectionate it is. This is something which Tina was constantly mindful of throughout the project. ‘Life is already difficult so you’ve got to make films where audiences feel good. Even if the subject matter is serious you need to keep your audience uplifted; give them hope and that is what cinema is for me,’ says Tina.

Looking to the future, Tina has new projects in the pipeline. As part of Bridge + Tunnel Productions, of which Tina is Founder and Creative Director, two more features are in development: The Good Iranian and The Woman Who Captured Saddam. ‘Things are going really well,’ says Tina. ‘There’s a lot of interest in the projects and I’ve been able to get a lot of support, which means I keep making films which I am passionate about doing.’

Despite her film-making success, Tina has no plans to give up teaching. ‘I love teaching, I’m a natural teacher and students are at the heart of my films. I actively engage my students on the things I’m developing. And by helping them develop their work, I’m also constantly creatively problem solving.’

‘My film-making work and teaching work really go well together,’ concludes Tina. ‘I realise how lucky I am to be in that situation. It does mean I work really hard, rarely sleep and have no social life, but besides that I really love what I do!’

I Am Nasrine is available to buy now on DVD.
Dr Vicky Forster, of the Northern Institute for Cancer Research.
Newcastle University’s Northern Institute for Cancer Research (NICR) is home to over 200 clinicians and scientists. A multidisciplinary research institute, the NICR has produced world-leading research for over the last decade. David-John Mather chats to Dr Vicky Forster (PhD 2012) about the NICR, her own research and a social media post that inspired thousands around the world.

‘DEAR CANCER’

Upon completing a PhD two years ago, Dr Vicky Forster posted a celebratory message on Twitter which would bring her both national and international attention. Having survived cancer herself at a young age, Vicky’s message sent a stark warning to the disease – she had beaten it as a child and now she was qualified to join the fight to eradicate it. Since completing her studies, Vicky has become a research associate at Newcastle University’s NICR and now works on a range of world leading cancer research projects.

Founded in 2001, the NICR’s laboratory research is based in the University’s Faculty of Medical Sciences and Science, Agriculture and Engineering. There are four interrelated research teams based in the NICR, each with a unique focus and expertise.

‘It’s great working at the NICR,’ says Vicky. ‘There are so many people working on so many different types of cancer. There are a range of diverse experts and it’s a really good team. It’s quite incredible the amount of specialities we have here. One of the most important things to remember about cancer is it’s not one disease. There are around 200 different types and they’re all completely different. Even adult and childhood cancer is very different in many ways.’

As part of the NICR team, Vicky is involved with a range of projects. ‘I’ve got about six different projects on the go, including some collaborative projects that we’ve started,’ she says. Although active with a variety of projects, Vicky’s own work primarily focuses on leukaemia research. ‘My research mainly looks at why people get leukaemia in the first place, essentially why the DNA of cells mutate and why that has a knock-on effect and causes leukaemia,’ Vicky explains. ‘I work on quite a few different types of leukaemia caused by different DNA mutations.’

‘I’m also looking at why a certain type of DNA mutation might make some patients more sensitive to certain types of drug. If we find that out, we can identify them and possibly modify their treatment to better suit them,’ says Vicky. ‘We are also hoping to look at why some childhood leukaemia patients get really bad heart problems after a really common chemotherapy drug. We think we know the problems in their DNA that actually cause that, so we might be able to warn their doctors.’

Curiously, you may be surprised to hear that, for the most part, chemotherapy drugs have not changed greatly in recent years. ‘Most of the drugs for childhood leukaemia are the same ones we were using 30 years ago,’ explains Vicky. ‘We’re just using them more cleverly now. Ideally, we want more targeted therapies, which only attack cancerous cells, not healthy ones.’

Vicky herself has always been scientifically minded. ‘I knew I wanted to do science as a career, but I didn’t know whether I wanted to do research or work in industry,’ she recalls. However, it was only after completing a summer lab-based project that Vicky made the decision to undertake a PhD. ‘Around the same time, she also made up her mind to come to Newcastle. ‘I was attracted by Newcastle’s reputation, it’s a very good research university,’ she adds.

Vicky’s scientific thinking was arguably nurtured to an extent while receiving her cancer treatment as a child. ‘I’ve always been a bit nocturnal; I used to sit home late and sat down at the computer to chat online with friends. At the time, the topic ‘Dear Cancer’ was trending on the social networking site Twitter. Although hesitant at first, after some encouragement Vicky decided to send a tweet about her own experience. ‘I sent a tweet saying, “Dear Cancer, I beat you aged eight and now I’ve got a PhD in cancer research”.’

Vicky is based in the University’s Faculties of Medical Sciences and Science, Agriculture and Engineering. In the morning, Vicky awoke to find her tweet trending on the social networking site Twitter. Although hesitant at first, after some encouragement Vicky decided to send a tweet about her own experience. ‘I sent a tweet saying, “Dear Cancer, I beat you aged eight and now I’ve got a PhD in cancer research.”’

But back to that tweet: In 2012, after an evening celebrating the completion of her PhD, she arrived home late and sat down at the computer to chat online with friends. At the time, the topic ‘Dear Cancer’ was trending on the social networking site Twitter. Although hesitant at first, after some encouragement Vicky decided to send a tweet about her own experience. ‘I sent a tweet saying, “Dear Cancer, I beat you aged eight and now I’ve got a PhD in cancer research.”’

‘I remember going to theatre for injections and operations, waking up and wanting to talk to the intensive care nurses,’ remembers Vicky. ‘I think they got fed up after a while and gave me more gas!’

‘I was getting a message literally every 10 seconds from people all around the world. I understand it’s now at 14,000 re-tweets and has been translated into French, Spanish, German and Portuguese!’ Local, national and even international press interest would soon follow, many offering payment for a feature. Vicky declined most of these offers, explaining, ‘I wasn’t interested in making any money out of it. I just wanted some awareness and publicity for the University and our research.’

Vicky has since used her profile to boost fundraising efforts, including raising an impressive £2,500 completing the Great North Run. She also remains in contact with parents who responded to her tweet about their own children’s treatment.

The work of the NICR – and indeed Vicky’s own research – is made possible with funding from a range of different charities. More than ever, funding is unquestionably vital to cancer research. ‘The funding is the limiting factor,’ explains Vicky, ‘Cancer research needs much more work.’

In light of this, the Alumni Association’s Annual Fund has been fundraising to support Children’s Cancer Research at the NICR. Thanks to the hard work of our phonathon team, our alumni have already generously pledged £110,000 towards funding a PhD studentship to join the fight against childhood cancer.

Concluding the interview, Vicky returns to her work, completely focused on her research and the future. ‘When I was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia in 1994 the survival rate was 65% and now it’s 90%,’ she explains. ‘This is great, but it’s two-and-a-half to three years of constant treatment. It’s curable but it’s hard; it’s horrendous not on only the child themselves, but the family too. And of course, one in ten children still don’t survive it. There is still a tremendous amount of research that needs to be done into childhood leukaemia – we’ve got to improve things.’

You can find out more information about the NICR at: www.ncl.ac.uk/nicr

For further information about the Alumni Association Annual Fund, please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/fund
In 2009, the opening of Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed), an international branch campus for medicine and biomedical sciences, saw the beginning of a new chapter in Newcastle’s medical history.

And now five years later, the first cohort of students will graduate having completed a five-year MB BS programme, identical to that of Newcastle’s UK provision. Their graduation in June this year shall not only serve as a testament to that of the students’ hard work, but also for the staff at NUMed who have made it possible.

In 2008, Malaysia’s Minister of Higher Education, Dato’ Mustapa Mohamed formally invited Newcastle University to establish its first international branch campus in Johor, Malaysia. Further developing the University’s profile as a world-class university, the development has contributed to Malaysia’s human capital needs. The initial enrolment of 20 students commenced in the spring of 2009, with the team receiving hundreds of enquiries from both local and international students. Following a formal welcome by Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Brink, the students commenced their studies in the UK before transferring to the Malaysian campus later in their programme.

NUMed was opened formally in November 2011 by His Royal Highness The Duke of York, KG. Speaking at the official opening, Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Brink said, ‘The opening of NUMed epitomises our vision of Newcastle as a civic university with a global reputation for academic excellence.’

Situated in Nusajaya, Johor, and part of EduCity in Iskandar, each graduate this June will have obtained a reputable UK qualification from an internationally recognised university. Students at the newly constructed campus benefit from innovative, first class facilities in which to study.

NUMed Malaysia aims to deliver a cost-effective medical programme of the highest quality, meeting the needs of students and the regional health economy. In doing so, it translates the benefits of our academic endeavour for not only the benefit of Malaysian society, but also the greater Asian region.

You can find further information about NUMed Malaysia on the website: www.ncl.ac.uk/numed

Spotlight on NUMed Malaysia

Newcastle is the first UK university to develop a medical campus overseas. In June 2014, Newcastle University’s NUMed Malaysia campus will see its very first students graduate.
Newcastle’s £50m lab to test real-time smart technologies

Towards the end of 2013, Newcastle University announced an ambitious £50m project to create the smart city of the future through a combination of digital ingenuity and scientific expertise with social innovation.

The University has appointed London-based architects Hawkins\Brown, in conjunction with BuroHappold and BD Landscapes, to design a £50m ‘living lab’ which will be used to research, design and test smart-city technologies.

The ‘living lab’, to be built by 2017, will sit within a 100,000 sq ft research facility as part of Science Central – the £700m regeneration of the former Scottish & Newcastle brewery site in the city centre. Led by the Science City partnership, comprising Newcastle University and Newcastle City Council, the scheme will accommodate more than 1.8m sq ft of offices, residences, retail and leisure, and the research facility at the 24-acre site.

In December 2013 the University announced it would invest £50m in the facility to enable a 100-strong team of University researchers and scientists to undertake pioneering research on sustainability, urbanism and the digital economy.

The building is expected to become a test bed in its own right: it will incorporate technologies to monitor energy performance, and other ‘smart’ building management systems to keep track of everything from workers’ movements to security.

Crucially, the facility will seek to transform Newcastle into a ‘city of the future’. Researchers will work with the council, emergency services, water authorities and transport operators to collect data on traffic flow, air quality and weather conditions.

A control centre dubbed the Decision Theatre will gather the data to create a real-time picture of what is constantly happening in the city, and monitor it to enable fast decision making – for example, in the event of a flood, and longer term to adapt the city to, for example, climate change.

Putting users at the heart of the project, the leading team of engineers, scientists and digital researchers from Newcastle University are asking the public what they need to improve their everyday lives.

Using this feedback, together with information about energy systems, environment and mobility from hundreds of high-tech sensors across the city, the project will change the face of Newcastle city centre. Everything from transport and energy systems to the very fabric of the buildings will all work together to improve the user experience while reducing our carbon footprint.

Professor Phil Taylor, Director of Newcastle University’s Institute for Sustainability, who is leading the University part of the Science Central project said, ‘This is about taking a dynamic and ambitious city like Newcastle and using it as a test bed to create a world-leading example of urban sustainability that others can follow.’

‘Science Central offers us a unique opportunity to bring together internationally leading researchers, expert practitioners and cutting-edge equipment so we can tackle some of the most important global urban sustainability challenges facing society today.’

He explains that rapid population growth and climate change will force cities to be more flexible to survive. ‘Cities are struggling with ‘infrastructure lock-in’, meaning their growth and sustainability is restricted by the typical 100-year lifespan of roads, buildings and other infrastructure. We need to create agile cities, and the living lab will test ways of doing this.’

‘Science Central offers us a unique opportunity to bring together internationally leading researchers, expert practitioners and cutting-edge equipment so we can tackle some of the most important global urban sustainability challenges facing society today.’

Professor Phil Taylor, Director of Newcastle University’s Institute for Sustainability

For further information about Science Central please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/sustainability/initiatives/sciencecentral.htm
Winning the ocean race

Newcastle University is leading a national centre for subsea and offshore engineering as part of a major drive to develop new materials and technologies to explore the world’s oceans. Building on the region’s maritime heritage and Newcastle University’s world-leading expertise in marine engineering, the Neptune National Centre for Subsea and Offshore Engineering will be a centrepiece for the revival of parts of Tyneside, bringing with it jobs and investment. Professor Nick Wright, Director of the Neptune Centre, explains how the North East is leading the way in the global race to harness the power of the sea.

The Neptune Centre will bring together leading researchers, companies and the community to explore the opportunities of the sea.
With the world population set to grow to nearly eight billion in the next decade, demand for resources and space will become the defining characteristic of the future world economy.

At present, man’s activities are largely confined to the one third of the planet’s surface that is land or shallow coastal waters. It is inconceivable that the remaining two-thirds of the planet will stay ignored as our population expands – not just as a simple source of resources but also as an active component of a global sustainable economy.

It is this vision of the sea as being a defining opportunity for the 21st Century that has led Newcastle University to establish the Neptune National Centre for Subsea and Offshore Engineering on the banks of the River Tyne. Announced as part of the UK’s national oil and gas strategy, the Neptune Centre will grow over the next decade to be a world class engineering innovation hub that will bring together leading researchers, companies and the community to explore the opportunities of the sea.

The new centre will sit on a 0.4 hectare plateau at the north end of the new Neptune Energy Park. The front of the building will contain offices while the back will have a unique hyperbaric chamber and environmental test facilities – capable of testing technologies and materials at temperatures and pressures equivalent to those found at the very deepest ocean depths.

The £7m research centre will be part-funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) from the Catalyst fund and matched with funding from Newcastle University and the private sector. It is also supported by Newcastle City Council. The Neptune Centre already has the backing of leading UK companies through the Subsea North-East Consortium including Shepherd Offshore, BEL Valves and SMD.

The demands of subsea engineering are so exacting that the very best of technology is essential – driving forward innovation and design. This makes this sector the most exciting to be involved in as we witness what is effectively the modern day equivalent of a space race – the ocean race is a global phenomenon that involves competition and collaboration across many countries. The North East has been outstandingly successful in the early phases of the ocean race with for example local companies growing to employ nearly 15,000 people in the subsea sector. But global competition is fierce and if the North East is going to stay in the leading pack, activities such as the Neptune Centre will need to play a strong role.

So what are the opportunities for the future? As we explore the oceans, we will need a myriad of technologies and skills to enable us to secure resources and effect operations. For example, there are significant opportunities for specialised consultants who can assist with identification and planning of projects. We will also need the ability to install large engineering installations that have been fabricated on-shore. This will create opportunities for companies that can manufacture specialised marine structures and equipment or repair existing ones. The deployment of these structures and their maintenance is a highly skilled field in itself that creates huge opportunities for operations based companies to provide crucial support to deployed infrastructure such as offshore wind farms amongst many others. Within manufacturing, subsea and offshore components are needed in ever greater numbers and all are the very epitome of high value manufacturing. To speed up this innovation, the Neptune Centre will have highly specialised test and engineering facilities to enable companies to develop these products and services through collaboration.

But perhaps the most important factor in the ocean race will be finding and training the right people with relevant skills. Almost all ocean projects are bespoke and require the absolute latest technology – these can only be designed and delivered by the best people. The Neptune Centre will play a crucial role in inspiring young engineers at the graduate level and will work closely with partners at other levels so that the North East can create a truly joined up skills pathway – that will provide young people with a route to what will be a fantastic career.

The future for the North East is bright but we must compete hard to prosper in the ocean race. The Neptune Centre will provide crucial capability to help the North East compete as our companies generate a projected further 15,000 jobs over the next decade.

This article originally appeared in The Journal on 14 August 2013.
Protecting cultural property during times of conflict

Professor Peter Stone OBE, of the University’s International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, teaches and researches in heritage management, interpretation and education. His research focuses on the obstacles to the protection of archaeological sites and historic buildings in zones of armed conflict. Once destroyed, cultural heritage cannot simply be rebuilt.
By the time you read this you may well have seen George Clooney’s film The Monuments Men that charts, with Hollywood’s characteristic disregard for historical accuracy, the Allies’ struggle to protect Europe’s cultural heritage during the final years of the Second World War through the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Unit.

‘Unfortunately, the catastrophic destruction and looting of cultural property seen in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali and Syria remind us that destruction and damage to the cultural heritage still continues wherever armed conflict occurs,’ says Professor Stone.

Professor Peter Stone, Head of the University’s School of Arts and Cultures, has been working with the UK Ministry of Defence and NATO over the last decade in an attempt to encourage the military to take cultural property protection (CPP) more seriously. The key has been to identify where CPP overlaps with military interests. ‘While individual officers usually understand and fully accept the importance of cultural heritage, its protection during conflict has not, until recently, been high on their agenda,’ explains Professor Stone.

A number of avoidable events during recent overseas deployments have focused military minds; these have included a failure to prevent the looting of museums, the unnecessary damage to significant archaeological sites and centuries-old irrigation systems through the construction of military bases, along with insensitive deployments of troops.

Professor Stone, who was awarded an OBE in 2011 for services to heritage education, says, ‘In these, and unfortunately other examples, the failure to protect cultural property has made the military’s work more difficult as the failure alienates the local population.’ This has led the military, encouraged by Professor Stone, to reassess CPP as what they refer to as a ‘force-multiplier’ – something that potentially makes their job easier.

Professor Stone’s most recent publication A 4 Tier Approach to CPP was published in both the archaeology journal Antiquity and in the British Army Review, thereby encouraging both parties interested in CPP to work together. His article outlines four different times when cultural heritage experts need to interact with the military and other relevant agencies such as police and customs: long-term; immediately pre-deployment; during conflict; and post-conflict stabilisation.

Shocked by the destruction to cultural property during the Second World War, the international community came together in 1954 and produced The Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Convention is elaborated by two Protocols (1954 and 1999). The 1954 Convention includes the Blue Shield as an emblem to be used to identify property to be protected and the Blue Shield as the organisation with responsibility for CPP is mentioned in the 1999 Protocol. The Blue Shield has recently adopted Stone’s 4 Tier Approach as international policy as a means of setting a framework within which liaison between cultural heritage experts and the military can take place.

‘Unfortunately, despite numerous promises going back to 2004 that the UK government sees ratification of the Convention as a ‘priority’, successive governments have failed to find time to pass the necessary national legislation to allow ratification,’ says Professor Stone. In spite of these setbacks, Professor Stone continues to work with the military as it acknowledges the importance and value of the protection of cultural property.

You can read Professor Stone’s article, A 4 Tier Approach to CPP, online at: http://tinyurl.com/Stone4Tier
When it comes to helping our students get the most up-to-date picture of the world of work, our alumni have a part to play. Marc Lintern, Director of Newcastle University Careers Service, explains how your real world experiences can shape the future of our current students.

Are our students making the most of your experience?

You’re out there, working; you have that first job that got you on the ladder. You know what employers asked you about at interview, what your work culture is like – and you hopefully understand what your job involves.

As you progress you’ll be thinking about exactly the same things as our students; what sort of job you want, how you will get there and what you want from your life. Most importantly, you’ve probably made a few mistakes here and there. You will have learned lessons that you will apply in the future and our students can also learn from these too.

Although I graduated more than 20 years ago, I still remember the pleasure I got from going back to talk with students still to graduate. It wasn’t just the chance to pass on what I had learned, but the opportunity to catch up with old lecturers, visit some old haunts and to see what had changed on campus.

I’m still asked back to my old universities from time to time and I still enjoy talking with students about how I accidentally found myself working as a careers adviser. But deep down what I know is that what our students often really want is the opportunity to talk with graduates who are only just ahead of them and who really understand what their world is like. In the words of Homer Simpson, ‘I haven’t changed since high school and suddenly I’m uncool’.

Don’t get me wrong, there is no shelf life for alumni when it comes to working with our students, far from it. Opportunities such as our Employer Mentoring Programme, where we link students with a career mentor, are an invaluable means for our students to meet professionals from their chosen career area and learn from experience gained over many years.

More established alumni can also give a higher level view of how to get into a career area or organisation and suggestions of where to apply for roles through network contacts.

However, the reason for mentioning the value of our new alumni is that new graduates can often wonder what contribution they can make and can be reticent about putting themselves forward.

We are very keen to hear from any of our graduates willing to come back and talk with our students.

‘In a competitive job market, we really benefit from alumni who can reinforce our message to students that they need to start planning their career early.’

Marc Lintern,
Director of Newcastle University Careers Service
Five ways for you to support our students

1. Write a profile for Graduate Connections, telling students about your career to date.
2. Volunteer to work as a career mentor or e-mentor.
3. Register with the Alumni Association as a volunteer to spend a day with us for one of our student competitions.
4. Make sure your company is advertising student and graduate vacancies with the Careers Service.
5. Connect with the Alumni Association and Newcastle University via LinkedIn.

Get involved!
To get involved, please e-mail: alumni-volunteer@ncl.ac.uk
It’s been another tremendous 12 months for The Courier, which has walked off with student media’s top prize for the second year in a row. In November 2013, Editor Ben Travis (2012–13) and a couple of members from the sub-editorial team attended the annual Guardian Student Media Awards in London where they were awarded ‘Student Publication of the Year’. Current Editor, George Sandeman, was also named ‘Student Journalist of the Year’ by the National Union of Students in July 2013.

Under the editorships of Kat Bannon (2011–12) and Ben Travis (2012–13) The Courier has gone from strength to strength establishing itself not only as one of the country’s largest and best student newspapers, but also as one of the few remaining weekly student newspapers. We’ve managed to put together a really strong sub-editorial team again this year with a good mix of old heads and fresh ideas, and we’ll be doing all we can to give readers another year of high quality reporting and entertainment.

So far, we’ve covered a wide range of news items relevant to our student community, as well as how to take a ‘selfie’ correctly, and continuing the ever-successful and funny Blind Date. However, by far the most important thing we did last year was to get behind the #Match4Martin campaign by teaming up with the Anthony Nolan charity, the Marrow Society, the University and the Students’ Union to help find a suitable bone marrow donor for a second year student in need of a bone marrow transplant.

As we look to finish 2013–14 strongly, much of our focus was on the Stan Calvert Cup as Team Newcastle faced Team Northumbria once more. Whilst our fellow students were wrapped up warm supporting the team, we were on the sidelines scrabbling together match updates for the live blog whilst trying not to fall in the mud, all part of the fun!
NSR Update

It’s full steam ahead for NSR!

NSR does Children In Need

The NSR team held an array of crazy activities in aid of Children In Need, an annual televised fundraising event led by the BBC that supports and changes the lives of disabled children and young people in the UK. Since launching in 1980, it has raised over £600m.

Breakfast show host Jon Waite delivered his show from his own bed, while Zoe Troughton persuaded 21 people to join her on air, breaking the record for ‘most guests on an NSR radio show’. Sam Clegg and Chris Young presented their entire three-hour slot in just their underwear! Alex Cumming and Hannah Goring also presented a show in their pyjamas, and there was on-air ‘Ruth or Dare’ with Ruth Bader.

CDs, cakes and bakes were also sold in the Union, and the week ended with Dylan Healy and Al Bell waxing their legs, thighs, armpits and even faces, raising more money (and many eyebrows) along the way.

By the end of the week the NSR committee had raised £280, before preparing to do it all over again for RAG Week 2014!

You can listen to NSR live from anywhere in the world simply by visiting www.nsrlive.co.uk and interact with the team through Facebook and Twitter – they’d love to hear from you!

Front Pages of The Courier, 2013–14

The Courier is renowned for being one of the truest reflections of popular student opinion of the moment. Here we bring you a selection of front pages from over the last academic year.

You can also read the latest from The Courier, and browse digital editions of the newspaper, online at: www.thecourieronline.co.uk.
The Ancient & Honourable Society of Newts

‘Friendships change over a lifetime as circumstances evolve and people move to new locations. It will ever be thus. We can justifiably claim that ours has truly stood the test of time.’

Many things about Newcastle University connect our alumni, whether it is their degree programmes, halls of residence or clubs and societies. But perhaps even more special are their friendships and memories.

One particular group, The Ancient & Honourable Society of Newts, have remained friends for over 55 years (most of whom were undergraduates in the mid-fifties, at King’s College, Newcastle which later became part of Newcastle University). They have recently published their own book, A Nest of Newts, which chronicles their friendships, meetings and milestones.

Dr John Craven (BSc Agriculture 1959, PhD Agriculture 1962) and Dan Cherrington (BSc Agriculture and Economics 1960), the authors of A Nest of Newts, have kindly allowed us to reproduce some of the book’s photographs and extracts to share with Arches readers.

The book follows their individual and collective lives from when they first met, at the start of the 1956 academic year and in the faculty of Agriculture, right up until the present day.

In The Beginning...

‘There were about 30 of us, all fresh-faced and enthusiastic, ready to learn all about farming and hopefully gain a degree to help us persuade an unsuspecting employer to give us a job.’

‘Rag Week was a major event in the winter term calendar. The city frequently came to a complete standstill as a rag-tag band and procession of drum majorettes marched down the main streets.’

A sunny graduation day, outside King’s Hall, Armstrong Building with Percy Building to the right.

Sport

‘A common denominator for most of us was sport at varying levels of ability.’ Below: Dr Craven (Captain) sits front row centre. Dan Cherrington also captained King’s College 3rd XV.

Summer of our second year, 1958. Professor Mac Cooper, Dean of the faculty, sits front row centre.

Right: Three Newts and two medical students finished an impressive 16th out of 300 crews, winning the JAU Championship.

King’s College 1st XV Rugby team 1959 - 1960.

Rowing in the Thames Head of the River Race in March, 1958.
Dr John Craven

‘Although I have lived in Cheshire for 50 years, I was born in Newcastle and educated in the North East. The urge to return regularly to my roots is compelling, both to the city, which has changed so much and even more to Northumberland with its rolling countryside, spectacular coastline, challenging climate and wonderful people.

I met my future wife at King’s College where she was a medical student. Her father was Mac Cooper, the formidable Dean of Agriculture. Our eldest son is also an agricultural graduate and his daughter is currently a second year medical student at the University. So as a family we have good reason to continue to follow the fortunes of our alumni!

It is not so much the fact that the ‘Newts’ were formed that astonishes people, but the length of time the group has survived. It started as a meeting of like-minded young men from different backgrounds studying medicine, engineering, economics, agriculture or even classics; all with a common interest in sport, visiting the pub and enjoying ourselves.

A couple of years ago we debated the question, as our numbers were gradually reducing, whether we should call it a day, wind up our meetings and fade graciously into the sunset. Not a bit of it – the unanimous view was we must go on to the last man standing. He will inherit the dirty raincoat which one of our members used to eat, sleep and live in during those glorious far off days.’

Dan Cherrington

‘I went to Newcastle to study agriculture because my farming father was a friend of Mac Cooper, the Dean of Agriculture and a radical thinker from New Zealand. He had a far wider sympathy and understanding of the antics of students than most academics.

I had never been north of Berkhamsted, so Northumberland was a foreign land; but I remember playing rugby for the Third XV against Ashington. I spent an hour in the bar afterwards chatting to a very amiable chap called the ‘divil’. I didn’t understand a word he said – I just smiled and muttered ‘yes, um’, as we do in Hampshire. In the end he shook his head and wandered off. Apparently he’d been asking if I’d buy him a pint!

I remember Newcastle was very cold. I remember the chaos and eating chips for tea (too early to call it dinner) in the Union Refectory. Unfortunately you had to pass the Mens Bar on the way out down the stairs – and as a result, I probably didn’t learn as much about agriculture as I should!

The very best thing about university is the deep, uncomplicated friendships. My best friends are ‘Newts’ and each time we meet the years peel back and we are young again. I’ll raise my glass to that – “Well done young Dan” I can hear them chorus, followed by “it’s your round!”’

Copies of A Nest of Newts are available to buy for £9.99 (including postage and packaging) from Dr John Craven. Please e-mail jbcraven.spyhill@btopenworld.com.
I wish my students realised... how much we care about them. We can enable them to develop and build the future that they wish to see. We try to equip them with knowledge and skills they require for achieving their goals. We want them to fulfil their intellectual abilities by responding to their needs and expectations, in turn building a better future for both themselves and society.

If I wasn't an academic... I would have been a businessman. My father was a very successful businessman and self-made millionaire! He would have liked me to carry on with his business and I was certainly encouraged to do so. I would have made a lot of money, but I always had a passion for higher education, I find it extremely satisfying.

The thing I love most about my job... is that we make ourselves eternal by building the future. It is said that the best way to predict the future is to build it. We are helping people to achieve their ambitions, realise their dreams and unleash their talents. I look at higher education as a vehicle to releasing intellectual ability into the real world, building and helping nations and societies. It is a privilege to be in such a satisfying role.

Although I don't like... to lose opportunities. The wait to achieving something can sometimes be long and I don't like to see a single opportunity that can change a lifetime be missed. I tell my students and colleagues to treat every day of their lives as their 'second and last' one.

Not many people know I have a passion for... glass painting! I taught myself to glass paint when I was 16 and do it very professionally too. I actually bought my first car, a Mini Cooper 1967, when I was 17 by selling my glass paintings; probably nobody would guess that I could be an artist!

My idea of absolute vulgarity is... being obnoxious and arrogant!

A vice I'm willing to admit to... Diet Coke! I love Diet Coke, I drink three or four cans a day. And I enjoy a variety of pop music – every time my 20-year-old daughter catches me listening to it she is shocked and says, 'Dad, this it not for people of your age!'

My favourite view in Singapore is... Marina Bay Sands and the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Both of these are fantastic areas and my young children love exploring them. They're gorgeous; the Botanic Gardens have a natural beauty, whereas Marina Bay Sands has a structural and suburban beauty.

My personal philosophy is... life is too short. If you're not at the table at the right time, you might be on the menu. You should always use your opportunities. I am always happy and enjoy my life; try to make the most of every day.

At 11am on a Sunday, you will generally find me... spending time with my children swimming, or doing the weekly shop with them (I mean running after them!) at the supermarket.

Professor Ehsan Mesbahi served as an Engineer Officer on board merchant fleets sailing around the globe before coming to Newcastle in the late 1980s to do his MSc and later his PhD. Ehsan started his academic career at Newcastle University as a Junior Lecturer, before becoming a Senior Lecturer and later a Professor of Marine Informatics in 2006. His main areas of expertise are informatics (intelligent algorithms) and technologies for environmental protection.

After many years of developing international research and educational partnerships, Ehsan has led and developed Newcastle University’s operations in Singapore since 2006, establishing its first overseas campus. Ehsan has been the University’s Dean in Singapore for three years and Chief Executive Officer of NU International Singapore since 2009.

For more information about Newcastle University International Singapore (NUIS) please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/singapore.
Newcastle University: Your University for life

Alumni Consultative Group Elections
At this year’s annual reunion weekend, Convocation, we shall see the new body of our Alumni Consultative Group (ACG) elected. Let Arches give you a quick guide to the ACG, their important work and how to cast your vote.

The ACG’s responsibilities
The ACG exists to support and promote the interests of all graduates of Newcastle University. ACG members are volunteers who want to give something back by using their skills and experience to support the activities of the University, its graduates and current students. ACG members act as ambassadors for the University, and as a liaison between the alumni community and the University’s senior management team. Each member has an opportunity to provide valuable input into alumni-related matters.

Outside of these regular commitments, ACG members are encouraged to be as active as possible. Projects being supported by current ACG members include building an alumni volunteering programme and working with the international development society to build the International Development Alumni Association.

ACG Membership
Members are drawn from the body of Alumni, the senior management of the University, the Chairman of Convocation and the Union Society. As of 2014, the ten Alumni members are now elected every five years to serve a five year term. Two of the ten elected members are then voted Chair of the ACG and Deputy Chair of the ACG at the annual meeting of Convocation. The other members (senior management and Union Society representative) are appointed by virtue of their professional role within the University.

Members of ACG are required to attend four meetings a year, as well as attending Convocation Weekend, our annual alumni reunion. ACG meetings usually take place on a Saturday morning at Newcastle University. Members resident outside the UK may attend three of the four meetings virtually, either via conference call or Skype.

The Election Process
All members of the Alumni Association were eligible to stand for election. The nomination period opened Monday 13 January and closed Friday 11 April at 5.00pm. Candidates’ profiles and personal statements were placed online on Friday 18 April, with voting opening on Monday 21 April.

Voting closes at 5.00pm BST on Friday 16 May. Candidates will be notified of the results by Friday 30 May, and the results will be made public during the week commencing Monday 2 June. Successful candidates will be expected to attend Convocation Weekend which takes place between Friday 20 and Saturday 22 June, when ACG will meet to elect a Chair and Deputy Chair from among the 10 new members.

How to vote
All members of our alumni community are eligible to vote using our online form. If you haven’t already received instructions on how to vote, please contact the Alumni Relations office (you can find our contact details on page two). Paper ballot forms are available upon request, but please be advised that the deadline for all votes is Friday 16 May 2014 at 5:00pm. Candidates’ profiles and personal statements were placed online on Friday 18 April, with voting opening on Monday 21 April.

For further information the ACG’s work and elections, please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/involved/consultative

Interested in volunteering at Newcastle University?
Finding yourself with a bit of spare time and would like to spend it on a good cause? Looking to develop your skills or gain experience in a new field? By becoming an Alumni Volunteer, you can make a difference and continue to support Newcastle University.

Newcastle University volunteers are at all stages of their careers and lives, with many former students playing an active volunteering role in supporting the University and its community. It’s a great way to meet new people, catch up with old friends, allows you to share your experience with the University’s undergraduate, postgraduate and graduate community and provides invaluable support to the University.

By volunteering you could:
• Gain new ideas and perspectives
• Grow your networks
• Contribute to the development of your profession
• Develop professionally
• Build your career
• Mentor the next generation

There are many volunteering opportunities within the University and they include:
• Alumni mentoring (in person and online) – help give current students and recent graduates support in their careers.
• Alumni branch representation – keep the University’s networks thriving across the world and act as a point of contact for alumni in your area.
• Speakers for events – help to inspire the undergraduate, postgraduate and graduate community at networking and professional development events.
• Work experience – offer invaluable placement and internship opportunities to students.
• Provide case studies and testimonials to support student recruitment.
• Organise a reunion – help the University extend its reach across the world.

To register your interest in volunteering and to find out about other volunteering opportunities, please contact the alumni office at:

alumni-volunteer@ncl.ac.uk or call 0191 208 3559.
Guest reviews from the Newcastle University alumni community.

**Burning to Get the Vote**
Colin Cartwright
(BA English 1986)

*Burning to Get the Vote* was the message left by suffragettes in March 1913 when they firebombed Saunderton Station near Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire. This book, which borrows the phrase for its title, is the product of original research into the history of the women’s suffrage movement in central Buckinghamshire between 1904 and 1914. It was inspired by the author’s chance discovery of a newspaper archive outlining an interview with his great grandfather.

The book illustrates the twists and turns in the campaign for women’s suffrage by describing in detail events, actions and meetings that took place, the organisations involved and the women, and men, engaged in both peaceful protest and militant activities.

The book is about the women’s suffrage movement in a small area of the UK so a casual reader would also be of interest to local historians and genealogists looking into family connections in Buckinghamshire as many will find references to relatives involved in the movement.

Reverend Colin Cartwright is a Baptist minister who has lived in the Chilterns since 2000. He is a keen local historian and photographer and has devised six heritage walking trails that trace the relatively unknown history of the women’s suffrage movement in Buckinghamshire. These include significant events such as the firebombing of Saunderton Station, prison protest in Aylesbury and the march of the National Women’s Suffrage Pilgrimage. If an opportunity presents, walking the trails would be a useful precursor to reading *Burning to Get the Vote* for those unfamiliar with the geography and local history of the county. The trails leaflet can be downloaded at: http://ow.ly/tJQ3I

Reviewed by Sue Bevan (BSc Hons Zoology 1979)

**Diagonal Ties**
Susan Lewis
(BSc Botany 1969)

‘Anything for a fellow Welshman’ said the stranger as I thanked him for guiding me through unfamiliar London streets – funny that, because I was born and bred in the North East. But there is a link between the two regions born out of steel and coal, and this is brought to life in the description of the migrations of Susan Lewis’s forebears between Wales and the North East dating back to the 1800s. She herself continued the tradition by making the journey from Durham to Wales in the 1980s.

The genealogy has been meticulously researched, sifting through 254 hefty volumes to pin down her paternal great-grandfather though, as the author says, this would be primarily of interest to relatives of the wider Lewis family described in the book. However, this forms the weft on which is woven a picture of life in two regions.

Descriptions of the workplace, the workhouse, a bobby’s beat in rural Wales and other social structures draw on historical records, recollections of ageing relatives and a degree of imagination acquired from the perusal of so many dusty documents. They will particularly delight those who know one or both of the regions. Descriptions of Merthyr Tydfil in its pomp — Thomas Carlyle’s ‘vision of hell’, of John Lewis her great-great-great-grandfather ‘a prominent and respected figure… overseer of the poor’, and a personal view of The Boer War graphically described in her grandfather’s letters from the front all help to create a very readable informal history.

Reviewed by Dr David Moffatt
(BSc Agriculture 1966, PhD 1971)

**Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree**
Val Scully (MA Creative Writing)

A tale of discovery for two women from the same family living generations apart, *Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree* opens with the shock news of the disappearance of a child from a family farm in Lancashire.

Family tensions and rivalries are explored through the tale of the search for the truth. Annie, starting her life afresh as her marriage dissolves and her children have flown the nest, works to fit the numerous jigsaw pieces of her family tree together. On her journey she encounters complex characters of the present as she tries to unravel the mysteries of her ancestors. Esther, forging her way in a new era for women, is keen to improve the ‘lot’ of Lancashire women, searching for personal happiness along the way.

Val Scully’s first book is heart-warming and well written. We are drawn to Annie and Esther, as both enjoy new ventures, develop new friendships and ignite new love. Their paths follow very similar routes, albeit almost a century apart.

I was particularly drawn to Esther and her family as my paternal grandmother of the same generation had actually worked in the Lancashire mills. I really enjoyed this book with its various twists and surprises. Right to the final few pages, we are kept in suspense for a resolution to the opening line: ‘They said the gypsies stole my brother, but I was not so sure.’

Reviewed by Helen Miland
(BSc Geography 1994)
Every month our e-mail newsletter AlumNews connects us with alumni from across the globe. We take a look back at some of the most popular stories from recent months.

Reunited and on the road
Almost 30 years after a severe motorcycle accident, David Burdus (BSc Zoology 1982) reunites with his hospital companion with their sights set on a 2,500-mile free-wheeling road trip in aid of charity.
www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/r/reunited

David gives us the latest news about the preparations for the trip:
‘There have been several developments recently; with the trip set to take place in the first two weeks of August. The trek will last about 10 days and three other biking clubs are now also getting involved to help with fundraising. I am now also in touch with three other Conquest riders; there are only six in the UK and Greggs the Bakers are kindly going to be feeding us from their various outlets all the way down too!’
‘We are now planning the route, which will be around 1,100 miles from John O’Groats to Land’s End (double that because we have to get to the start point and get back!). We are also looking at how we can procure accommodation for a team of between six to 10 people too.
Camping is going to be the cheapest option but it would be nice to end up in some form of hotel accommodation. I am also in various discussions about sponsorship, as we need to cover petrol, insurance, accommodation and post-filming production. If anybody would like to get involved or help us out – and help us raise funds for the Percy Hedley Foundation, a North East charity which provides education, opportunities and services to children, young people and adults with a diverse range of conditions including cerebral palsy, sensory and communication impairments, then please get in touch with me at david@burdus.com or visit www.justgiving.com/jogle-2014.’
Every year the Alumni Relations Team helps to organise numerous reunions and events. For many of our reunion groups, their time at Newcastle was not only about gaining a good degree, but forging friendships that would last a lifetime. Many of these groups also give something back to current students in the form of Class Gifts.

60 years of medical spirit

The medics of 1953 are one such group of our regular reunion-goers. Each year, the group makes a gift and awards a prize of £500 to a final-year MB BS student who has been deemed by their peers to have contributed most to the camaraderie of the year group.

Dr Geoffrey Marsh MBE (MB BS 1953, MD 1974), the organiser of the ‘Year of ’53 Award’, reflects on his time at Newcastle, the opportunities it brought and the collective spirit shared amongst his classmates to this day:

‘Possibly with rose-coloured specs, but looking back over 60 years those five spent at the ‘Old Medical School’ on the corner of St. Thomas’ Street rank as some of the best of my life.

‘What a superb medical education we received. It enthused us about every branch of medicine. And because I enjoyed every specialty, I decided to become ‘just a GP’ and practise them all in a large Primary Health Care Team in Stockton-on-Tees, where personal service lists and continuity of care were mandatory. This setting provided opportunities for teaching, research, many BMJ (British Medical Journal) papers, six books and two Visiting Professorships in Canada and the USA.

‘But Med School wasn’t all work; careering through the Haymarket on a rickety ‘float’ in the Rag Parade, dancing the night away to a top London band at the Arts Ball, watching ‘Medicals’ win the Northumberland Senior Rugby Cup two years running and putting on our own ‘Year Review’ in the RVI canteen were all part of the joy. Not to mention falling in love for the first (but not the last) time!’

‘Our year have had about 15 Reunions, the last one 60 years after graduation — only 14 of us able to attend and the youngest 84! We fund a £500 Year of ’53 Award given to the student whose colleagues feel has done most to engender camaraderie across the year group – an appropriate memorial from a very grateful year.’

In our last edition of Arches, Dr Marsh penned an ode to his classmates of the year of 1953. He has done so again and we are pleased to bring you some excerpts below.

Random Reflections: ‘48 – ’53

by Dr Geoffrey Marsh MBE

I’ve written tis poem ‘bout the times we had,
When we were all young, just a girl and a lad,
D’you think like me of dissections and grind,
And the lectures and ward rounds, do they all come to mind?

I entered King’s Hall with Jack I remember,
To sit Finals Part One in early December;
On the walls there hung portraits of physicians resplendent
Obstetricians, gynaecologists and other incumbents;
Jack glanced at them all, safe before he began,
“If I know all that they knew I’ll fail this exam!”

D’you still recall the bell that rang, only twice a year it tolled
When we all assembled near the porters’ lodge to hear Norman Shott unfold
Names that had passed – but some were missing,
Resits at Christmas – for them no kissing.
But most of us cheered and laughed again after five great years
Of fun and strain,
And Neville, Johnny John and Jack had honours to their name.
And off to tell the world we went, that our grind was not in vain
As we spilled into the sunshine to telephones down the lane.

But my dear pal Jim got his bus back home
To the coast town – his domain
Got out his books, and shed a tear – read it all again, again
And yes it’s all now in the distant past,
And it scarcely matters too:
For we’ve made our marks as best we could and
We’ve helped some patients through
And as our brains befuddle and medical facts we all forget,
Let’s hope for a painless ending, but not for quite a bit yet!

You can also watch Dr Marsh perform his poem in full via our website: www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/arches

Dr Geoffrey Marsh MBE and David Eastwood at this year’s Year of ’53 Prize reception.
Countdown to Convocation

Every June, hundreds of graduates and guests return to the City Campus for our annual alumni reunion, Convocation Weekend. This year’s Convocation takes place between Friday 20 and Sunday 22 June. The weekend is always packed full of activities and is the highlight of our events calendar.

Convocation Weekend is a fantastic way to catch up with old friends and classmates. Attendees also have the chance to revisit the campus and Students’ Union, as well as hearing from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Chris Brink, about the exciting new developments taking place in the University.

At this year’s Convocation we will also be celebrating the special anniversaries for the Classes of 1954, ‘64, ‘78, ‘94 and 2004.

In addition to the Meeting of Convocation, Convocation Lunch and Convocation Lecture, other confirmed highlights include visits to Science Central, the Northern Institute for Cancer Research (NICR), the new NU Food Facility and various School visits. Special events will also be held at the Business School, Dental School and School of History, Classics and Archaeology over the course of the weekend.

A full programme can be found on our website at: www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/events/cw.

Could you be our next Chair of Convocation?

The University, on behalf of Convocation, would like to announce that elections for the positions of Chair of Convocation and Deputy Chair of Convocation will be held this year. Members of Convocation are invited to stand for election.

Any individual who wishes to stand is invited to submit a brief statement to the office of the Registrar setting out their background and the reasons they wish to seek election. Nominations for both roles must be supported by at least five members of Convocation.

Those present at the meeting of Convocation on Saturday 21 June will then be invited to elect two candidates. For further information or to nominate yourself for the positions please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/events/cw or call the alumni office on 0191 208 3571.

Inspired by Dr Marsh’s poem in our last edition of Arches, current and final-year medical student David Eastwood has also composed his own poem, paying tribute to his classmates in their final year.

Year of ‘14
by David Eastwood

It started a while ago, did this medical year,
An interview, an emotion, was it hope or fear?
And then out of the blue, on a pale March day,
Our fate was decided, the doubt cast astray.

And we came one September, to the baltic North East,
With Searle, Spencer and Bradley — last; by no means least.
There was something for everyone to keep up the fun,

A shock back in November, with our wits put to the test,
We scraped through exam questions that we somehow guessed.
While we dismiss family who nag about some rash or sneeze,
As soon as it’s you; that lecture?! It’s the deadly disease!

In third year we spread out; Northumbria, Tyne, Tees or Wear,
By speaking with real patients, things started to become clear.
A spare part on the ward, asking questions, being a pain,
Always the worst jobs, is that flashback? Nah missed the vein.

In fourth year, we were reunited; our year apart had soon gone,
And the thought of an elective was the one thing that spurred us on,
Whether at home or abroad, we were leaving our mark,
Unless you were revising, blame that devil, Dr. Dark.

The friends we make, the lives we change, this is the crowning jewel.
Bring it together, here tonight, as one, our medical school.

So here’s to the Year of dear ’14
So much already, we’ve learnt and seen,
But this is a new path, a welcoming cheer,
And the fog of the future will soon become clear.

For information about making a Class Gift, please visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/giving/ways/class

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The Big Market

Exclusive deals and offers for Newcastle graduates from Newcastle graduates.

Welcome to our exclusive benefits and services package for Newcastle University alumni, The Big Market. If you are a graduate offering a fantastic product or service and would like to reach over 160,000 potential customers, please contact us at alumni-office@ncl.ac.uk.

**Apartment Bon Sejour, Grimentz, Switzerland**
A comfortable 2-bedroom traditional chalet-apartment, providing an excellent holiday base in both winter and summer.

*Offer:* 10% discount off advertised rates.

*Courtesy of:* Shirley Watson (BSc Civil Engineering 1975).

*How to redeem:* Mention membership of the Alumni Association when booking.

[www.grimentzswitzerland.co.uk](http://www.grimentzswitzerland.co.uk)

**Chilli Promotional Products**
Chilli provide a customer-focused approach to clients looking to source corporate gifts, promotional merchandise, and personalised clothing throughout the UK.

*Offer:* 5% discount on all orders.

*Courtesy of:* Jody Fletcher (BSc Food Marketing 2000).

*How to redeem:* Quote promo code 'NUBM2014'

[www.chillipromotions.co.uk](http://www.chillipromotions.co.uk)

**Clear Blue Water Strategic Solutions**
Expert consultancy and training, supporting executive leaders and managers through innovative work-placed interventions.

*Offer:* Free first coaching session, accompanied by diagnostic test.

*Courtesy of:* Andrew Lee (MBA 2008).

*How to redeem:* Mention membership of the Alumni Association at time of booking.

[www.cbwss.co.uk](http://www.cbwss.co.uk)

**Darlings of Chelsea**
Darlings offer a range of mid-priced sofas, sofa beds and corner sofas in both leather and fabric, priding themselves on the quality of their products and standard of service.

*Offer:* 15% discount off a wide range of products.

*Courtesy of:* John Darling (BSc Agri-business Management and Marketing 1999).

*How to redeem:* Contact John Darling and state discount code ‘NewcastleAlumni’.

[www.darlingsofchelsea.co.uk](http://www.darlingsofchelsea.co.uk)
**Holistic Lingua**
An online German language course for beginners.
**Offer:** An additional month’s subscription completely free.
**Courtesy of:** Tony Brush (MEng Microelectronics and Software Engineering 1995).
**How to redeem:** Enter discount code NUGRAD2014 via the website.
www.holistic-lingua.com

**Iles Tours**
A range of walking tours exploring Newcastle’s history and culture, from a passionate and knowledgeable tour guide.
**Offer:** 10% discount off tours when pre-booking.
**Courtesy of:** Alexander Iles (BA Politics and Sociology 2011, MSc Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship 2012).
**How to redeem:** Enter promo code NUAlumni14 when booking online.
www.ilestours.co.uk

**JBL Country Photographs**
Quality mounted photographs of UK countryside landscapes, flora and fauna and scenes from yesteryear.
**Offer:** A third off all 12”x10” and 20”x16” mounted photographs, plus free p&p.
**Courtesy of:** James Linn (BSc Agriculture 1975).
**How to redeem:** Please mention membership of Alumni Association at time of ordering.
www.jblcountryphotographs.com

**OakBox**
An online marketing agency, specialising in content and community building, with a holistic approach to online marketing.
**Offer:** 20% off marketing packages and new quotes.
**Courtesy of:** Luke McGrath (LLB 2008, MA Creative Writing 2010).
**How to redeem:** Please mention membership of Alumni Association when enquiring.
www.oakbox.co

**Nitro Consultants**
Strategic commercial advice for business owners and managers, including start-ups, SMEs and large corporates.
**Offer:** 15% discount on all services.
**Courtesy of:** Mat Shepherd (BA French 1994).
**How to redeem:** Contact Mat for more information – ms@nitroventuresuk.com

**Northumbrian Medical Supplies**
Northumbrian Medical supply medical equipment to GP surgeries, nursing homes and other professionals across the UK.
**Offer:** 5% discount on all orders.
**Courtesy of:** Anthony Armstrong (BSc General Agriculture 1979).
**How to redeem:** Use discount code NU2014 online or at time of ordering.
www.normedica.co.uk

**The Natural Navigator**
Fun and practical private and corporate training days, through the practice of natural navigation.
**Offer:** 10% discount on training days.
**Courtesy of:** Tristan Gooley (BA Politics and History 1996).
**How to redeem:** Mention the Alumni Association at time of booking.
www.naturalnavigator.com

**Prrrfect Fit Ltd**
An intelligent online fashion store, seeking to make life easier by taking the guesswork out of shopping.
**Offer:** An exclusive range of discounts and offers.
**Courtesy of:** Josh Fail-Brown (BA Business Management 2010).
**How to redeem:** Create account online and then follow the Newcastle University link using password NUPW13.
www.prrrfectfit.com

**Shiremoor Dental Practice**
A family-oriented practice providing a high-quality care focusing on prevention and offering a wide range of treatments.
**Offer:** 10% discount on various dental treatments.
**Courtesy of:** Melbourne Carew (BDS 2005).
**How to redeem:** Graduates should call for additional information on 0191 253 0001.
www.shiremoordental.co.uk

**Silicon Dales**
E-commerce website design including designing, creating, producing, hosting, maintaining and filling your digital properties with content.
**Offer:** 20% discount on e-Commerce web design.
**Courtesy of:** Linda Scott (BA Politics 2006).
**How to redeem:** Quote reference NCL2014 via e-mail (robin.scott@silicondles.com) or telephone on 01969 605003.
www.silicondales.co.uk

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www.silicondales.co.uk

**tee-hee Asia**
tee-hee Asia brings together marketing expertise with creative flair and an easy-to-work-with project management process.
**Offer:** 5% discount on all services.
**Courtesy of:** Giacomo Lotti (BA Combined Studies 2004).
**How to redeem:** E-mail Giacomo at giacomo@teeheasia.com
www.teeheasia.com

**Tom Willcox PR**
Tom Willcox PR specialises in creative, high-quality copywriting and communications provision, and provides businesses with high-impact, low-cost communications and PR services.
**Offer:** 25% off Tom’s standard hourly rates.
**Courtesy of:** Tom Willcox (BA Ancient History 1994).
**How to redeem:** Please mention the Alumni Association at time of booking.
www.tomwillcoxpr.co.uk

**Zaini Hats**
Comfortable, casually styled and colourful hats and headbands.
**Offer:** 10% off all items on the website.
**Courtesy of:** Miranda Harper (BA Media, Communication and Cultural Studies 2009).
**How to redeem:** Enter ‘newcastle’ at checkout page to receive your discount.
www.zaini.com

**Zander Wedding Photography**
Stylish and contemporary images by an experienced Newcastle-based photographer.
**Offer:** 10% off Zander’s standard hourly rates.
**Courtesy of:** Alexander Wilson (BA Town Planning 2010).
**How to redeem:** Discount can be redeemed by entering NUAlumni14 at www.zndr.co.uk, or via e-mail at hello@zndr.co.uk
www.zndr.co.uk

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1970s

Eric Mark Charlton (BA Hons German Studies 1970) went travelling in France before taking up a position in the Pharmaceutical Research Biology department of Boehringer Ingelheim, based in the Rhineland, where he trained in drug related methods of laboratory analysis. Using the language skills he acquired at Newcastle, Eric would later work for Bayer, BASF and the Ministry of Defence at their HQ in London. Along with his partner Ute, Eric founded his own medical translation company in 1982. Over the last three decades he has taken the company from strength to strength.

Mark Shelton (BSc Joint Hons in Genetics and Zoology 1978, MSc 1982) trained and became a teacher at primary school, following three years research at Cambridge University Genetics Department. A change in career saw Mark move to Cambridge to become a Recycling Officer at Cambridge City Council, before he would later become Cambridge County Council Waste Policy Manager in 2007. Moving into the private sector, Mark is now Waste Education Manager for AmeyCespa Ltd working on awareness campaigns with councils to help improve recycling. Mark enjoys his work enormously and lives in Ely with his wife and two of his children yet to leave the nest.

1980s

Professor David Terrell (PhD Physics 1982) completed his studies and became a researcher at the Mexican Petroleum Institute, part of the National University of Mexico. In 1997 he moved to Portland, Oregon, USA to become a physical science professor at Warner Pacific College. His main interest is in the chemical area, but he also teaches courses related to the environment. David is fond of Portland as its microbreweries means he can get Newcastle Brown Ale!

Jonathan Goodman (BA Combined Studies 1986) joined Peugeot as a graduate and has been with them for 27 years. Within the company he has held numerous roles, both in the UK and abroad, including marketing and managing director roles in the UK and Belgium. He is now Communications Director for the PSA group worldwide based in Paris and a member of the executive board. Jonathan met his wife Sarah, when the pair were both undergraduates at Newcastle. He looks forward to returning to the University, of which he has fond memories, to visit his son who is studying Chemical Engineering here.

Kate Baucherel née Milner FCMA (BA Hons Accounting and Financial Analysis 1988) secured an AIESEC traineeship for a year in the USA after her studies, before returning to Newcastle to train as a Chartered Management Accountant. After a spell in accountancy, Kate opened the Teesside region of Go Kan Ryu Karate before becoming financial director for a range of businesses. Kate now runs two businesses, Gala Digital Ltd and JDrew Creations Ltd. Kate also has a book in the pipeline which is due to be published very shortly.

Professor Gordon Cooper (MSc Geophysics and Planetary Physics 1983) has resided in South Africa since 1984. He is currently Professor of Geophysics at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where he also gained his PhD.

Wendi Mitchell née Foster (BA Politics 1985) has had an interesting and varied career, having joined the Home Office to work in the Immigration and Nationality Division, before joining the Prison Service as a management consultant and then policy adviser. Wendi also worked for the Director General and later joined the Ministry of Justice, advising ministers on how to improve the criminal justice system for victims and witnesses. Most recently she has led on taking the primary legislation and now leads a team developing the secondary legislation to set up a single family court. She has also passed a HR postgraduate diploma and two law postgraduate diplomas. Wendi’s father still lives in the North East so she regularly returns to the region.

Jason Norris (second from right) with fellow advisers
1990s

Dan Mather (BSc Natural Resources 1994) moved to Tanzania where he became Cashew and Forestry Plantation Manager for three years. During his time there he witnessed the first democratic election in Tanzania in 45 years. He then moved to London with Credit Suisse, before moving to Sydney and becoming Head of Technology for Fidelity Australia. Having surfed just off Tynemouth, he can safely say Sydney is slightly warmer than the North East!

Dr Raja Muzaffar (Mahariz, check) (MB BS 1995) undertook some pre-registration house jobs in the North East upon completing his studies before training in histopathology in Birmingham in 1997. This was followed by higher specialty training in 1998 in Sheffield. Dr Muzzafar obtained Membership of the Royal College of Pathologists in 2006 and has since worked as a Consultant Histopathologist in Doncaster.

John Gibson (BA (Hons) History 1999) spent some time travelling in America following his undergraduate studies, before returning to Newcastle to complete an MA in International Studies, followed by a Research Council funded PhD in Politics. As well as previous roles as a music journalist and a stint at the LSE, John has had his work published into two leading academic journals. He is now Senior Research Executive at Marketwise Strategies.

2000–10s

Jason Norris (MA Cross-Cultural Communications and International Relations 2004) moved to Seattle, Washington where he taught English as a second language. After several years, he accepted a new position as English Instructor at the University of the Andes, in Bogota, Colombia. In addition to this part-time position, Jason is also Communications Adviser to Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism of the Republic of Colombia, Sergio Diaz-Granados. Both jobs bring him a varied challenge, as well as the opportunity to use what he learned during his time at University.

Dan Howarth (BA English Language 2005, MA Media & Journalism 2008) began working in the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) as a Research Assistant in December 2004, while continuing with his studies at Newcastle University. Dan’s role developed and he became the Publications Officer within DARO, spending many years as the Editor of Arches and AlumNews. Dan left the University in March 2013 to take up an exciting position as Digital Manager at Leeds College of Music. A belated good luck in your career Dan, we know you will do a marvellous job with whatever you turn your hand to.

Shuoying Xie (MA Cross-Cultural Communication and International Management 2009) completed her studies and returned to Shanghai. In that time she has worked as Market Development Manager for Zincobre Ingeniería SLU and is now in the process of starting up her own auto accessories business.

Emeritus Professor Duncan Murchison

The University announces with deep regret the death of Emeritus Professor Duncan Murchison on 13 November 2013. Professor Murchison graduated in Geology from King’s College, Newcastle where he was President of the Students’ Union from 1953 to 1954. He then worked as a geologist with Royal Dutch Shell prior to his appointment as Research Associate in the Department of Geology in January 1958. He was appointed Lecturer in 1960, promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1968, appointed as Reader in Geochemistry in 1971 and appointed Professor of Geochemistry at the University in 1976. He was Dean of the University’s Faculty of Science from 1980 to 1983. Professor Murchison served as Pro-Vice-Chancellor from 1986 until his retirement in 1993 when he was accorded the title of Emeritus Professor. During this period he also served as Acting Vice-Chancellor from January to December 1991.

Professor Charles K Rowley

Professor Rowley was formerly Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences (1978-1981 & 1983), David Dale Professor of Economics and Head of Department (1972-1983) and Director of the Centre for Research in Public and Industrial Economics at the University (1974-1983). Professor Rowley’s published papers appeared in numerous leading scholarly journals. He is survived by his wife, Marjorie, and two daughters, Amanda and Sarah.

www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/news/obituaries.htm

Looking for an old classmate? Wondering where they are or what they’re up to?
Drop us an e-mail at alumni-office@ncl.ac.uk and we’ll try to put you in touch with them!
Newcastle University’s alumni community stretches right across the globe! The Development and Alumni Relations Office organises a number of international events and reunions each year. All graduates are welcome to attend.

Our recent programme of events has shown just how truly global our alumni community is. Since our last edition of Arches, we have held events in Brazil, China, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Kenya, Singapore, Spain and the USA!

Top: Newcastle University alumni at a British High Commissioner Reception, Accra, Ghana, February 2014.

Middle: Alumni enjoy a career-focused event in Shanghai, China, February 2014.

Bottom: The Alumni Association held its first ever alumni events in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, March 2014.

Is 2014 a special year for you? Organising a reunion?

If you are thinking of planning a reunion, but are unsure where to start, take advantage of the advice the Alumni Relations Team can provide! We can provide a range of advice, from booking a venue, catering, invitations and publicity. Throughout the year we help a number of groups organise their own private reunions. We can also assist you in locating the relevant alumni for your event too.

If you need any further information on any of our events, have any suggestions for future events, or would like to recommend a venue, please get in touch. You can find our contact details on page two.

The Walton Salver 2014

Newcastle University’s annual alumni golf tournament, the Walton Salver, is set to be contested again this year in the stunning grounds of Close House, Northumberland on Sunday 31 August.

With all proceeds going to support the talented students in our Elite Athletes Squad, and a range of prizes on offer, there couldn’t be more reason to tee off!

The format on the day is a very sociable, but competitive Pairs Stableford competition. The tournament will be followed by a two-course meal and presentations.

For further information, or to register for this event, please visit www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/events.
...have an idea or are already running a business...?
then why not find out how Rise Up can help you access:

- opportunities to meet investors and raise finance.
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An exciting new partnership with Newcastle Science City – qualifying businesses could receive up to £10k* worth of assistance until 2015.

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