Welcome to Issue 3 of Arches, the magazine of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Many of you will have shared my disappointment in June when Newcastle Gateshead’s joint bid to become European Capital of Culture 2008 narrowly missed out to Liverpool.

It is important to acknowledge, however, the tremendously positive impact the bid process has had in galvanizing the North East and changing national and international perceptions of the region. The competition for the title of European Capital of Culture 2008 has already had, and will continue to have, a transforming effect on both the landscape and cultural activity in the North East. Not winning the title is tough, but in a very real sense this has been a good example of the maxim that it is not the winning but the taking part that matters.

The exciting plans outlined on pages 13–15 to develop a Cultural Quarter on the University campus perfectly illustrate the ongoing commitment of this University to play a leading role in our regional cultural renaissance. These plans, which are on top of a current programme of building and redevelopment across the University totaling more than £80 million over seven years, will transform the way we engage as an institution with the general public both locally and further afield. I very much hope that our alumni will be among the first to come back to visit us and witness the major changes taking place.

Finally, if you are interested in following progress on the Cultural Quarter and the many other interesting stories taking place at the University then you might like to consider taking advantage of our new NewsLink service. This service is fully accessible on the external website at www.ncl.ac.uk/press.office/newslink and anyone wishing to receive a weekly NewsLink bulletin by e-mail can join simply by sending a request to newslink@ncl.ac.uk.

I do hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of Arches magazine.

With very best wishes

Professor Christopher Edwards
Vice-Chancellor
**NEWCASTLE Universities UNITED!**

When Newcastle United travelled to Malaysia to play in the inaugural FA Premier League Asia Cup this summer, it provided Newcastle and Northumbria Universities with the perfect opportunity to team up to encourage more students from the Far East to study on Tyneside.

The Universities were one of the tournament sponsors and, as well as providing pitch-side advertising, they also produced a two-minute advertisement which was shown on giant TV screens in Kuala Lumpur’s national Bukit Jalil Stadium, and in the commercial breaks during the live TV coverage of the games.

Assistant Director of the International Office, David Forman, said ‘There are already a lot of students from the Far East studying in Newcastle, but we hope to attract many more through our involvement in the Asia Cup.’

The tournament also caught the imagination of many Malaysian alumni who attended the matches and visited a special alumni booth at the stadium. Around 30 alumni and guests also enjoyed afternoon tea with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Christopher Edwards, at the Palace of the Golden Hors in Kuala Lumpur, organized by David Forman and local alumni leader Dato’ Dr Haji Mohamed Ishak (Dip Town & Country Planning 1964, Dip Landscape Design 1963, Hon DCL 1993).

Around 30 alumni and guests also enjoyed afternoon tea with the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Christopher Edwards, at the Palace of the Golden Hors in Kuala Lumpur, organized by David Forman and local alumni leader Dato’ Dr Haji Mohamed Ishak (Dip Town & Country Planning 1964, Dip Landscape Design 1963, Hon DCL 1993).

For a team of football-loving Malaysian students, Newcastle United’s participation in the FA Premier League Asia Cup presented something of a dilemma: just which team should they support?

All of them grew up in Malaysia supporting their national side, but now the team, who regularly play in five- and six-a-side inter-university matches, are such big fans of Newcastle United that they have adopted the team’s famous black and white kit as their own.

As the Asia Cup kicked off, they admitted that they hadn’t decided whether they would like Newcastle or Malaysia to win. Ahmad Adam Kamarudin, an MSC Mechanical Engineering student, said: ‘We’ll be supporting both Newcastle and Malaysia in their first round matches. But if Newcastle meet Malaysia in the next stage, we really won’t know which team to cheer on. We will all be feeling divided loyalties as we watch the game.’

In the event, the Malaysian national side and Birmingham City FC were knocked out in the early stages of the tournament, leaving Newcastle United to face London-based Premiership club, Chelsea, in a nail-biting final – which Chelsea eventually won on penalties.

**HONOUR FOR SIR BOBBY**

Newcastle United’s manager, Sir Bobby Robson, has been honoured by the University for his achievements during his footballing career, spanning 53 years as a club and international player and manager.

At a ceremony in May, Sir Bobby received an Honorary Doctor of Civil Law degree from the Chancellor of the University, the Right-Honorable Christopher Patten CH, also receiving honorary degrees were Fiona Reynolds CBE, Director-General of the National Trust; International expert in computer security, Professor Fred Schneider, of Cornell University; and eminent industrialist, Dr Herbert Loew CBE.

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SKIN DEEP
SPREADING THE SUN SAFETY MESSAGE

One person you won’t see returning from his summer holidays sporting a suntan is Dr Mark Birch-Machin.

Dr Birch-Machin is building a reputation as a leading UK skin cancer expert, and is spreading the sun safety message to ordinary people through the media.

Particularly around the summer months, his telephone is busy with calls from journalists from all over the world – testimony to his ability to explain complex science in a way that readers, viewers and listeners can understand.

The charity Cancer Research UK, which funds some of his research, has adopted him as an official media spokesman on skin cancer.

Dr Birch-Machin’s public information role takes on added gravity as each year in Britain over 2,000 people die from skin cancer, a disease linked to sun exposure. Moreover, a recent UK survey showed a worrying gap between how much people know about the disease and how little they do to protect themselves.

Most recently his scientific research, carried out in laboratories at Newcastle University, was a central feature of a special edition of the ITV current affairs show, Tonight With Trevor MacDonald. The programme makers sponsored Dr Birch-Machin and his team to try out a pioneering test they have developed that charts the amount of permanent damage the sun’s rays have done to the skin’s genetic material, DNA.

The programme followed six young women in their twenties who volunteered to take the test before and after a week’s holiday in the Spanish island of Ibiza. The test involved analysing DNA from samples of skin taken from the volunteers. The results were startling – they showed that after just one week of sunbathing all of the girls had done serious permanent damage to their skin.

The damage represented a skin cancer ‘time bomb’ says Dr Birch-Machin, who was interviewed extensively in the half-hour show. The women had also increased their chances of looking 40 or 45 years-old by the time they reached 30.

He explains: ‘Every time you sunbathe – and especially when you get sunburned – you add an extra layer of damage. This makes the skin saggy, leathery, thick and discoloured. You are damaging the DNA in your skin cells, which can lead to skin cancer. It’s like a time bomb which could go off in 15 or 20 years.’

Dr Birch-Machin, a reader in molecular dermatology with the University’s School of Clinical and Laboratory Sciences, has been investigating skin cancer for several years. Laboratory tests showed that harmful ultraviolet radiation (UV rays) in sunlight can penetrate our skin and attack the DNA found in the cells’ powerhouse, mitochondria. This can happen as early as childhood and causes permanent damage to our skin cells. Some of the rays can form free radicals, which can change our DNA, while others have a directly harmful effect.

These findings informed the development of the test featured in Tonight With Trevor MacDonald, which provides a diary of sun-damaged DNA in skin cells. In future years doctors could potentially use it to provide tailor-made sun safety advice for patients. It may also be a useful tool for the cosmetics industry, as it could measure how well sunscreens work.

Dr Birch-Machin’s media work began two years ago when the University Press Office issued a news release offering seasonal advice to summer holiday makers. Media training followed, which improved his interview technique.

He says: ‘Sharing our expertise with the public is just as important as doing the science, as ultimately, it could help save lives. If we can convince people of the importance of looking after their skin in the sun, then it’s a job well done.’

More information about skin cancer can be found on Cancer Research UK’s website: www.cancerresearchuk.org/sunsmart/
ARCHES Alumni News

STILL SPRIGHTLY AT 90

Armstrong College graduate Constance Ayre, née Atherton (BSc Geography 1935, DThPT 1936) received a ninetieth birthday surprise in the form of a birthday card from the University on 21 April 2003.

Connie Ayre is one of the last surviving graduates of Armstrong College (then part of Durham University), which became King’s College in 1937 and finally the independent University of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1963. Although classified as a ‘lost alumna’ for the past 67 years, Connie’s son-in-law, David Budgen, alerted the University to his mother-in-law’s whereabouts and forthcoming birthday.

Much to everyone’s surprise, the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology still had Connie’s undergraduate dissertation on file on the subject ‘A Dissertation on Upper Weardale (with special reference to development during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries)’. There was also recorded a very favourable reference to Connie’s application for teaching, which was to be her chosen profession on graduating from Professor G H J Daysh in support of Connie’s application for admission to Armstrong College in 1937 and finally the independent University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Connie continues to lead a very active life and said: ‘I was graduating from the College in 1937 and finally the independent University of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1963. Although classified as a “lost alumna” for the past 67 years, Connie’s son-in-law, David Budgen, alerted the University to his mother-in-law’s whereabouts and forthcoming birthday.

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Connie Ayre’s graduation photograph.

ALUMNI ASSIST

STUDENT EXPEDITIONS

Newcastle University alumni in some of the remotest and least accessible parts of the world are helping current students taking part in the Student Expeditions Programme.

Newcastle has a long tradition of sending student expeditions overseas dating back to at least the 1960s. However, it is only recently that the student teams have been encouraged to link up with former students from the countries being visited, sometimes with very positive benefits. In the past two years, expedition teams have been assisted to varying degrees on expeditions to the Bahamas, Fiji, Indonesia, Kenya, Papua New Guinea and Tanzania.

Student expeditions provide a marvellous opportunity for students to develop their academic and personal skills, conduct some first-rate research and at the same time experience new and interesting cultures. Our student expedition members tend to be motivated and resourceful individuals who are required to organize and raise funds for their expeditions in the midst of their normal studies. They carry the excellent reputation of the University around the world and in many cases the research they undertake on their expeditions aims to offer positive benefits to communities and the environment in the countries that are visited.

Last year three students taking part in the Newcastle University Lulanda 2002 expedition to Tanzania benefited from contact with a number of alumni including Dr Rhodes Makundi (MSc 1984, PhD 1996) of the Sokone University of Agriculture in Morogoro, Tanzania. Team members Rebecca Haylow, Brett Larsen and Lisette Coffalt, all zoology undergraduates, collected data to make an assessment of the forest corridor programme implemented in the Udzungwa Mountains of Tanzania in order to combat native species loss caused by habitat destruction and forest fragmentation. Brett Larsen said: ‘Dr Makundi helped us to recruit local students to the project by posting our advertisement in his University whilst we were still in the UK. In this way we chose five brilliant students who worked with us in the field for five weeks. Dr Makundi also arranged for a trapping session to be held for us when we arrived in Morogoro, so that we could familiarize ourselves with types of traps and trapping methods as well as handling animals. We spent three lovely days in the University, feeling very welcome.’

Each year a couple of expedition teams report back on their experiences in the ‘Tales from the Bush’ lecture within the Insights Public Lectures series. This year’s lecture will be held at 5.30 pm on Tuesday 25 November in the Curtis Auditorium of the Herschel Building.

If you have interesting memories and stories about student expeditions in past years then we would like to hear them with a view to developing a feature for our alumni website at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/news/rememberwhen

TELL US YOUR STORIES

Connie’s dissertation.

Police Chief’s Rude Passion

Newcastle University alumnus Nick Fisher (BA English Language and Literature 1971, MLitt 1987) has an unusual interest away from his day job as a police chief superintendent in the Greater Manchester Police.

Nick works for HMIC (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary – incorrectly nicknamed OFLгод). He is part of the process by which the Home Office judges whether a particular police force is ‘efficient and effective’ and so justifies its central funding. Away from police work, however, Nick has pursued a long passion for the poetry of John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester, a famously libertine seventeenth-century poet and wit who wrote some of the filthiest verses in the English poetical canon.

‘The English Department I graduated from in 1971 had a reputation for being a lively and stimulating place,’ Nick explained. ‘I happily returned for a second helping, obtaining my MLitt after part-time study in 1987. I was fortunate in having in my second undergraduate year a brilliant and inspirational tutor, Ken Robinson. He introduced me to Rochester – the combination of passionate love lyrics, biting satires and rude poems made an unforgettable impact – and supervised my Master’s research.’

Nick’s interest in Rochester has kept him busy. He recalled: ‘To mark the 350th anniversary of his birth in 1997, I organized a colloquium at Wadham College, Oxford, and a music festival in venues in and around Oxford associated with the poet. I edited the conference papers, commissioned a CD from the Consort of Musica and co-edited a performing edition of Rochester’s songs.’

In 2002 Nick undertook his most unusual project to date: I discovered that an eminent Dutch composer, Hans Rox, shared an interest in “The Wicked Earl”, and he challenged me to write the libretto for a chamber opera based on the last weeks of Rochester’s life. It seemed a good idea at the time! The experience of seeing the finished opera performed this year was both moving and a little strange,’ he remembered. Nick is now busy submitting his doctoral thesis on Rochester for a PhD from the University of Leeds. Despite the Earl’s racy reputation, Nick remains adament that there is no contradiction between his own professional life and his interest in the controversial poet. Rochester was actually very much part of the Establishment – and there is a surprising professional link as he coined the word “shoplifting”.

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The University of Newcastle upon Tyne has been named as one of the UK’s top universities for technology transfer – using its world-class research facilities to benefit businesses and the economy.

A survey revealed that the University’s £5 million – using its world-class research facilities to the UK’s top universities for technology transfer, another prepares to expand its business into the United States.

Newcastle University has been named as one of University in the country.

The research, by Nottingham University Business School, identified four UK universities that are excelling at technology transfer. Although the interim report, which was published in June and detailed UK university technology-transfer activities in 2002, did not name individual universities, an article in the Times Higher Education Supplement subsequently named Newcastle, along with Edinburgh, Loughborough and Strothclyde, as the universities which served as case studies.

Novocasta Laboratories, which was taken over last July by Vision BioSystems, was set up by former Professor of Pathology, Wilson Horne, and his colleagues. It quickly became a world-leading manufacturer of antibodies, probes and kits used primarily in cancer detection and characterization. Last year five Newcastle ‘spin-out’ companies were formed; now the University has set itself the target of increasing the number to between seven and 10 per year.

Director of Business Development, Dr Douglas Robertson, said: ‘Selling out companies from our powerful research base is helping to create sustainable jobs and wealth. We also work with existing companies to help them improve their products and processes. We pride ourselves on being open for business, quite literally.’

www.ncl.ac.uk/ris/busdev

PREHISTORIC ART GETS THE MODERN TOUCH

People will be able to ponder the mystery that shrouds Northumberland’s collection of prehistoric stone carvings by logging on to a website that goes live next year.

Northumberland is widely regarded as having the country’s richest collection of rock art. About 900 panels exist and are typically a series of cups and circles of various sizes carved into a slab of rock. Most of the carved rocks are located in the countryside, but many have been removed to museums or private houses and some have been lost. Examples include England’s largest such site at Roughting Linn near the Scottish border.

Retired head teacher, Stan Beckensall, who has spent a lifetime charting the ancient phenomenon, has donated his extensive records, including photographs, drawings and books, to the University. In a project sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Board, the aim is to make the Beckensall Archive available on the World Wide Web to researchers, schoolchildren and anyone else who may be interested in finding out more about these fascinating marks our ancestors made on the landscape.

New information, such as global positioning system readings – highly accurate positions of the artwork compiled using satellites – and up-to-date photographs, will also be included on the Internet site. The site is due to go live in 2004 and is believed to be the most detailed of its kind in the world.

Project leader, Dr Aron Mazel, an archaeologist and research associate with the School of Historical Studies, said: ‘Stan’s collection is one of the finest in the world. We hoped the website would encourage further research as well as a general public interest in this fascinating element of our heritage.

Theories about the origins of the rock carvings vary. One says they are symbolic expressions of the changing relationship Neolithic people had with the landscape. Another says the carvings fulfilled a human need to mark the local environment. Ultimately, nobody knows for sure why they exist, or who created them.

www.historical-studies.ncl.ac.uk

Experts Bristle at Toothbrush Misuse

Breakfast TV viewers took a lesson in teeth cleaning from University dental scientists who led an early morning demonstration for the benefit of watching cameras.

The BBC was one of many media outlets from – focused on two volunteers who demonstrated the right and the wrong way to brush your teeth, with commentary from University expert Professor Peter Heasman.

The BBC was one of many media outlets from Australia to America that covered the results of Professor Heasman’s study, which found that brushing for two minutes, at a pressure of 150 grams, was the right combination for the average person’s cleaning routine. People who exceed this are unlikely to make their teeth and gums cleaner; and are likely to cause permanent damage, the study showed.

Professor Heasman said: ‘Despite our findings, anecdotal evidence within the dental profession suggests that the majority of the population still believes that the longer and harder you brush, the better for your teeth it is’.

People who are unsure about the right technique to use should visit their dentist or dental hygienist. ‘They will be able to train you and will show you approximately how much pressure you should be applying’, said Professor Heasman.

www.ncl.ac.uk/dental

Worm Firm Wriggles into US Market

Worm-breeding technology developed by University scientists could set American anglers off the hook. They are facing a shortage of bait as the booming fish farm industry consumes huge quantities of home-grown worms.

Seabait Ltd, an award-winning ‘spin-out’ company that uses advanced technology to breed ragworms in North East England, has launched a subsidiary in Maine, USA, to supply live worms to the USA as well as providing additional material for supply in frozen form to the South America’s ‘hatchery feed market’.

Professor Peter Olive, one of Seabait’s founding scientists, of the School of Marine Science and Technology, said: ‘Seabait Ltd, through its American subsidiary, will make good the supply of live worms for marine angling in the USA as well as providing additional material for supply in frozen form to the South America’s “hatchery feed market”.

Earlier this year, Seabait won two Queen’s Awards for Enterprise in the international trade and sustainable development categories, having previously won an award in the environmental achievement category in 1994.

High-tech worm-breeding techniques include cryogenics to freeze worm embryos for storage and using ‘waste’ hot water from a nearby power station to keep sand beds at the perfect breeding temperature.

Seabait Ltd has set up the subsidiary with the help of a development loan of up to $485,000 from the Maine Technology Institute and is now seeking further venture capital for a large-scale expansion programme.

www.seabait.com/index.html

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Nanotechnology

The rapid rate of scientific advance brings enormous benefits to society, but some feel that risks associated with new areas of technology are too great. Recently concerns were voiced by the Prince of Wales over perceived risks associated with nanotechnology, so we asked Professor Ken Snowdon, Director of the Institute for Nanoscale Science and Technology (INSAT) at the University to provide a lowdown on this emerging technology.

What is nanotechnology?
Nanotechnology is a technology defined in terms of scale. It describes materials, systems and devices with characteristic dimensions in the range 1-100 nanometer (nm). One nm is 1/1,000,000 of a millimetre, or roughly the distance spanned by four atoms, so nanotechnology is all about controlling component design and fabrication on atomic and molecular scales. It unites findings and processes from biotechnology and genetics, engineering with chemistry, physics, electronics and materials science with the aim of manufacturing cost-effective innovative products.

Commonplace examples of nanotechnology products include some magnetic memory devices, optical, protective and decorative coatings, some sunscreens and many cosmetics.

Why is there such excitement about this area of technology?
Nanotechnology has been recognized by leading industry advisers worldwide view micro- and biotechnology, defence, communications, in most high-technology sectors, including the miniaturization technology underpins innovation and development of affordable sensors for real-time recording of neurological activity and other biological functions.

For many years the University has fostered a range of cultural activities, located on the campus and representing a key interface with the city and the wider region. But these separate activities have never realized their full potential, let alone the wider synergies possible between them. A bold new vision has now been developed by a wide-ranging partnership of local bodies, led by the University and including BALTIC The Centre for Contemporary Art, the Hancock Natural History Museum, Newcastle City Council, New Writing North, Northern Stage, Tyne and Wear Museums, to establish a Cultural Quarter. This will transform the space where city and University meet into an exciting and vibrant area of cultural and social activity: a major contribution to the region’s cultural strategy.

The initial catalyst for the creation of the Newcastle Cultural Quarter was a major initiative by the University to assign a low penetration of the available local, regional and national marketplaces. This is unfortunate given the importance of the collections housed and the activities undertaken.

The infrastructure of these cultural assets, and their immediate surroundings, are a major part of the problem. The Hancock Natural History Museum is a splendid Victorian listed building housing a nationally designated collection, however, because of inadequate investment in its infrastructure, it does not achieve its potential as a visitor experience. The Museum of Antiquities and the Shefton Museum are housed separately in accommodation that is not purpose-built for museum purposes and, like the Hatton Gallery, not easy to find within the campus. It is these four elements which comprise the Combined Museum project, which is the subject of a major bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other sources of funding.

Linked to the Combined Museum project, the adjacent Playhouse Theatre has its own urgent need for major refurbishment and is the focus of separate grants from the Arts Council for England and Newcastle City Council.

Although these assets are sited very close to Newcastle’s main shopping street (with excellent public transport links) they are not seen by the majority of people of Newcastle and the wider region as natural places to visit: they tend to be marginal to people’s thinking and daily patterns of activity. This is not to say that our cultural assets languish unvisited; school parties are a key element of the visitors to the three museums, the art gallery and the theatre and each has a core of regular visitors, with strong loyalties. The problem is that these visitor numbers reflect, in marketing terms, a low penetration of the available local, regional and national marketplaces. This is unfortunate given the importance of the collections housed and the activities undertaken.

The Hancock

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The Hancock is a splendid Victorian listed building housing a nationally designated collection, however, because of inadequate investment in its infrastructure, it does not achieve its potential as a visitor experience. The Museum of Antiquities and the Shefton Museum are housed separately in accommodation that is not purpose-built for museum purposes and, like the Hatton Gallery, not easy to find within the campus. It is these four elements which comprise the Combined Museum project, which is the subject of a major bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other sources of funding.

Linked to the Combined Museum project, the adjacent Playhouse Theatre has its own urgent need for major refurbishment and is the focus of separate grants from the Arts Council for England and Newcastle City Council.

Although these assets are sited very close to Newcastle’s main shopping street (with excellent public transport links) they are not seen by the majority of people of Newcastle and the wider region as natural places to visit: they tend to be marginal to people’s thinking and daily patterns of activity. This is not to say that our cultural assets languish unvisited; school parties are a key element of the visitors to the three museums, the art gallery and the theatre and each has a core of regular visitors, with strong loyalties. The problem is that these visitor numbers reflect, in marketing terms, a low penetration of the available local, regional and national marketplaces. This is unfortunate given the importance of the collections housed and the activities undertaken.
Inevitably, the final form the Cultural Quarter will take is difficult to determine precisely at this stage. The success of each component project is dependent upon funding decisions, with financial support needing to be solicited from a wide range of sources. These include the University itself, applications to the Arts Council and Heritage Lottery Fund and other funding bodies and appeals for generous support from individual alumni and other supporters of the University. Despite this incomplete picture, it remains possible to look forward to 2008 and assert that a visitor to campus will be confronted with a completely reinvented scene on arrival. The transformation between the down-at-heel atmosphere of our cultural buildings in 2003 and their bright, inviting aspect in 2008 will be a visitor to, and accessible by, vastly greater numbers of people, whatever their background.

I

2008

WHERE COULD WE BE?

Alongside the main Combined Museum project, a range of intersecting interdisciplinary projects are emerging which will also form part of the Cultural Quarter. The Playhouse Theatre will have been upgraded with a new lobby and improvements made to its auditorium. Meanwhile the Culture Lab project will be running, which will bring together researchers of international excellence from the arts, humanities and sciences in a shared space incorporating a multi-user digital media facility with the aim of enabling new areas of creative and arts, humanities and sciences explore the cutting-edge potential of digital technology to express artistic aspiration and creativity. Next door, the Northern Writers’ Centre is also producing ground-breaking new work, supplemented by talks as part of the public lecture series.

I

The Hancock has now been restored to its former glory, in an innovative and exciting way that opens up its collection to the visitor and that not only utilizes state-of-the-art exhibition methods but also successfully breaks down the barriers between visitor and display on the one hand and storage and curatorial activity on the other. The visitor is engaged not only by the displays but also by what the museum staff do in their daily work of caring for the items in the collection.

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The Quarter incorporates shops and a variety of lively places to eat, inviting visitors to prolong their stay and sample what the other attractions have to offer.

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A (carefully sign-posted) exhibition at the Hatton Gallery nearby is clearly linked to one of the special exhibitions in the Combined Museum, an exhibition that it is now able to attract visitors because it has the custom-designed facilities that such attractions require.

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At the Theatre, Northern Stage are presenting two productions, one their own exciting work that is premiering in Newcastle, the other a piece devised in collaboration with the University’s own Culture Lab venture next to the theatre, where academics and students in the arts and sciences explore the cutting-edge potential of digital technology to express artistic aspiration and creativity. Next door, the Northern Writers’ Centre is also producing ground-breaking new work, supplemented by talks as part of the public lecture series.

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An unrivalled range of music is on offer, with high-quality professional and student performers contributing to the University concert series and an impressive roster of bands and DJ acts eager to perform in the students’ Union programme. The strong links between the multi-ethnic student body and the city’s varied ethnic and cultural groupings find expression in a number of events throughout the year. Above all, in subtle, unobtrusive and sympathetic ways, the visitor is made aware of a feeling of common purpose in the Newcastle Cultural Quarter – that, while each of its elements is pursuing its own artistic or heritage agenda in a vigorous and creative manner, there is a level of co-operation and integration ensuring that, for the visitor, the total is truly greater than the sum of the parts.

Behind the scenes, a structure of joint management of the Newcastle Cultural Quarter has been in existence since 2003. By 2008 the level of trust and experience of working together that the partners to the Newcastle Cultural Quarter will have accumulated, will mean that, as a matter of course, integrated programming, joint marketing and the sharing of facilities will be routine direct outcomes of managing the Newcastle Cultural Quarter together.

The major change that the Newcastle Cultural Quarter will bring about is that, at any one time, there will be a range of cultural, arts and heritage offerings that engage the visitor and bring the past, the present and the future to life in ways that transcend traditional boundaries between times, between disciplines and, particularly, between arts and sciences. As a result, the remarkable collections so inadequately housed and displayed in 2003 will be seen to be national assets; above all, they will have become available to, and accessible by, vastly greater numbers of people, whatever their background.

For further information about any aspect of the Cultural Quarter Project please contact the Cultural Quarter Project Office on +44 (0) 191 222 6066.

Anyone interested in supporting the fundraising drive for the Quarter should contact Chris Cox, Director of Development on +44 (0) 191 222 7250 or e-mail c.cox@ncl.ac.uk.
Dr Robert Shiel (BSc Soil Science 1969) of the School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development traces the history of agriculture teaching at Newcastle within the wider context of agrarian history.

When, in 1845, a new disease blighted local potato crops and Chartists were campaigning for the abolition of the Corn Laws, Professor Johnston of Durham University was lecturing on agricultural chemistry to the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle.

Johnston was an enthusiastic though something of a renegade at Durham where the smell of his guano raised ecclesiastical noses above their already exalted position. However, his many agricultural books were to remain in print through several editions. Lectures for farmers were not new; there were already numerous farmers’ clubs and the Board of Agriculture had been striving throughout the American and Napoleonic wars to stimulate food production. When the wars were over Britain and its Empire were triumphant. Manufacturers and their Free Trade ethos were in the ascendant. In less than two years the Tory Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel was to fall on his sword by repealing the Corn Laws and the manufacturers were to lower Chartists’ wages when the price of food fell. Agriculture began a long period of decline and when in 1850 Johnston left Durham it seemed that his new science would be consigned to a footnote in the Durham University Review.

At Newcastle there were sporadic attempts to introduce agriculture into the new College of Science but these fell on the proverbial stony ground until, as the depression deepened, Northumberland County Council Education Committee, concerned over the fate of local farming, provided funds for agricultural training at the College.

In 1892, the County Council endowed the Chair of Agriculture and, at the pleadings of its incumbent, Professor Somerville, a lease was taken on the farm at Cockle Park, north of Morpeth, in 1896. This farm demonstrated improvements to agriculture under subsequent professors, in particular Professor Gilchrist, whose species-rich Cockle Park grass seed mixtures can still be bought. Experiments demonstrated to farmers and students the effect of the new management using fertilizers, about which Johnston had been preaching 50 years before.

A combination of advisory work, short courses and the degrees proved very popular and the new department grew. Its greatest benefactor, Clement Stephenson, a local vet, paid for the construction of a building on the east side of the Quadrangle. However, before this was completed the horrors of the First World War would find it, together with the Hatton Gallery, used as a hospital and it was 1920 before the Agrics moved in. With the war over the government reverted to its Free Trade policies and agriculture slumped into a new depression.

Research at Cockle Park Farm and training of students and farmers on the short courses continued. Fortunately the experiments had all been aired, in keeping with the wishes of the external funder, at low-cost improvements, and hence remained appropriate. The Thirties were however a period of stagnation at Newcastle, and professors took to extramural pursuits, though elsewhere political changes would have a fundamental effect. The famine throughout Europe which had resulted from the potato blight, where we began, had contributed to the revolutions of 1848 while the depressed state of British agriculture had resulted here in widespread hunger, civil unrest and near defeat in 1917. This spectre raised its head again though the government was faster to act in the Second World War with its WarAg Committees and, in the true sense of the adjective, their draconian powers. Thes and the ensuing Cold War ensured the future of British agriculture with a policy of food from our own resources.

The Faculty had come through the war with a large proportion of women graduates, many of whom now rose to high positions in the new advisory service (NAAS) instituted by the Ministry of Agriculture. Northumberland County Council, finding the government providing advisory services, pulled the plug on Newcastle, the farm at Cockle Park was taken over by the Faculty and an additional farm leased at Nafferton. With the future of farming looking brighter than it had since the early nineteenth century, plans were made by the dynamic new dean ‘Mac’ Cooper for the Faculty to move to new accommodation in the sumptuous Agriculture Building, leaving to Architecture the original premises.

Instead of only serving local agriculture, the Faculty now looked to the world and welcomed overseas students and research. However, the new building was soon too small for the burgeoning Faculty and parts of Horsell, Porter and Bedson were quickly annexed. This unsatisfactory situation was resolved by consolidation in the King George VI Building in 1986.

The end of the Cold War and over-engrossment of the Common Agricultural Policy, together with concerns over the impact of successive governments’ encouragement to intensify by using more pesticides and fertilizers, has led to a decline in emphasis on production. Agriculture has moved from producing more food to a strategy where food production goes hand in hand with wildlife, countryside access and ecology. Of the experiments began in 1896 by Professor Somerville, one, at Palace Leas field, continues to provide data to those interested in the impact of climatic change on grassland and on the effect of management on ecology and species diversity. It is in fact now the world’s longest running grassland experiment.

Elsewhere, Nafferton Farm is undergoing conversion to organic management and the Centre for Rural Economy looks beyond agriculture to the wider uses of land outside our cities. Professor Johnston’s books remain available in the Robinson Library and the recent award of an OBE to Professor Philip Lowe for services to the rural economy and his role in establishing the Centre for Rural Economy at the University is a testament to the groundbreaking work in the agricultural area which Professor Shiel traces to this day.

www.ncl.ac.uk/afrd

ARCHES Feature

Digging up Dirt — Agriculture at Newcastle

AGRICULTURE FACTS

First-year agriculture student intake increased by 60 per cent in 2003.

AGRICULTURE FACTS

Organic food from Nafferton Farm is now on sale.
ARCHES Events/Listings

KING’S COLLEGE FIREWATCHERS REUNITE

On Wednesday 26 March 2003 around 30 former students of King’s College gathered at the University for a special evening reuniting alumni who performed firewatching duties at the College during World War Two.

The reunion generated considerable media interest, taking place against a backdrop of conflict in Iraq, and was reported on BBC radio and television as well as in the local press. More importantly, it generated a flood of happy memories from over 70 alumni (many unfortunately unable to attend) which have been made available online at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/news/rememberwhen. They will form the basis of a valuable archive of oral history for the future.

During World War Two the normal course of University life was interrupted. Male students commenced their degree studies as young as 16 years old, but in most cases went on to enlist into the services once they reached the requisite age, often returning to complete their studies after the war. Certain subjects, such as medicine and agriculture, which were deemed to be important for the war effort were afforded a ‘reserved’ status. Students studying these reserved subjects made up a disproportionate percentage of the student body and were afforded a ‘reserved’ status. Students studying these reserved subjects were afforded a ‘reserved’ status. Students studying these reserved subjects were afforded a ‘reserved’ status.

As well as performing firewatching duties most male students were also members of the Officer Training Corps (OTC). Although female students did not undertake formal firewatching duties themselves, they did perform a variety of important roles around the campus including operating the telephone exchange at night.

The reunion was the brainchild of Lord Ridley, the former Chancellor of the University, and Harry Earp, a former architecture student, who met as firewatchers in 1942–43. The firewatchers were welcomed back by Professor Madeline Atkins, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, who offered a belated thank you to all those students of the war years who had helped protect the College campus for future generations to enjoy.

A special memorabilia stand displaying a range of original firewatching equipment was organized for the reunion with the kind assistance of the University for his active leadership, involvement in the development of the campus – architecturally, academically and socially. Alumni can make unique contributions through their experience and knowledge. The University is keen to hear their views and we must ensure as many as possible are able to express them.

Sri Lanka Branch Launched

Two successful events in February and August 2003 have led to the launch of a formal Alumni Association branch in Sri Lanka. A committee has been elected with Dr Wimal Wimaladharma (BDS 1978) of the University and the British Council in Sri Lanka can work with alumni in support of our respective strategic priorities. The formation of the Branch is a real testament to the hard work of Dr Wimaladharma and his team of enthusiastic alumni colleagues.

Embassy Reception in Washington DC

Around 30 alumni and guests attended a reception held at the British Embassy in Washington DC. The event was attended by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Christopher Edwards, who talked about the University’s developing links with US institutions in a number of areas including medicine and the biomedical sciences. He also stressed the important role for alumni to play as promoters and advocates of the University and thanked those donors to the US Alumni Fund who had attended the reception. Mr Antony Phillipson, Counsellor, Trade and Transport, spoke on behalf of the Embassy and welcomed the University’s efforts to develop an active network of alumni in the USA.

Convocation 2004

The next meeting of Convocation takes place on Saturday 19 June 2004. The meeting will be asked to agree proposals completing a two-part process aimed at restructuring the Alumni Association and the Alumni Consultative Group (formerly named the Alumni Development Group), and this will also be the occasion for the election of a new Vice-Chair.

Please visit www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/involve/convocation for further information about Convocation. Please contact the Development and Alumni Relations Office if you would like information about election opportunities.

Convocation 2003

The meeting of Convocation saw the election of Mark Scrimshaw (BA History 1976) as the new Chair of the Alumni Association. Mark had already served for two years as Vice-Chair. The retiring Chair, Dominic Finto (BA Politics 1978), was thanked by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the University for his active leadership, involvement and support during his three years in office and over many years before.

FIREWATCHERS

Most male students performed firewatching duty while studying at the University during the war years.

Firewatchers at the reunion.

Mark Scrimshaw said: ‘I am honoured to have been elected Chair at Convocation. The University is entering a wonderful period of opportunity alongside the city, and I hope to be able to encourage as many alumni as possible to get involved in the development of the campus – architecturally, academically and socially. Alumni can make unique contributions through their experience and knowledge. The University is keen to hear their views and we must ensure as many as possible are able to express them.’

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Joel Burden, Alumni Development Officer, who attended the reunion on 16 June, said: ‘The establishment of the Branch is a very positive development which will provide a focus for Sri Lankan alumni to come together on social and other grounds, and a mechanism through which the University and the British Council in Sri Lanka can work with alumni in support of our respective strategic priorities. The formation of the Branch is a real testament to the hard work of Dr Wimaladharma and his team of enthusiastic alumni colleagues.’

Information for alumni in Sri Lanka including a registration form is available online at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/contact/branches/international/srilanka.html.

Still in Touch 43 Years On

In July 1960 a group of mechanical engineering graduates wrote their names and addresses on the back of a Union Refectory menu, little realizing that it would provide the foundation of a fellowship that has endured for 43 years and is now stronger than ever. Most of the group took the Final Year Honours Option ‘B’ (Production) course which had been introduced by Professor Burstall in 1959 for students with interests in manufacturing.

Alex Beever explained: ‘The Lads’ have kept in touch through almost annual newsletters and occasional reunions. Ex-lecturer of our time, Tony Bartley, and a more recent Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Len Maudmer, join us for our events and keep us informed of University news. The reunions are usually held in the North East, the Lord Crewe Arms at Blanchland being a favoured venue. However we have had two weekend events in the Cotswolds, the most recent in July 2003. We plan to be back in the North East for our 45th anniversary in 2005. As a result of Len Maudmer’s persuasive account of cultural developments in Newcastle/Gateshead during our recent gathering in Chipping Campden, we hope to return to our earlier venue in the city. Perhaps the occasion will provide an opportunity to revisit the University and our old Department.’

Class of 1960 mechanical engineers.

Class of 1983 alumni at Breakfast Weekend:

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Can you help? Alison Stansfield, Education Officer in the Ouseburn Valley, is researching the Victoria Tunnel used as an air raid shelter during World War Two. If you have memories of the Tunnel or relevant information please contact Alison by phone on 0191 232 3698 or e-mail alistan@globalnet.co.uk.

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Student Community Action Newcastle (SCAN) is celebrating a landmark year in its history. The organization, based at Newcastle University, welcomes over 500 student volunteers per year in the local community, celebrates 30 years as a registered charity in 2003.

SCAN became a registered charity in 1973 after many years of tireless work by student volunteers prior to that date. SCAN is the University’s only charitable organization. It has a membership of over 1,500 students, places student volunteers with over 70 local charitable and voluntary organizations, runs 10 of its own student-led community projects and employs three full-time members of staff.

The University’s version of Monopoly is the first of its kind, and was the brainchild of Mark Hurst (BSc Geography 1996). Product Development Director at Winning Moves International, the makers and licensers of Monopoly in the UK. The design of the board was worked out by a team comprising students and staff of the University, with students taking responsibility for writing a number of the Community Chest and Chance cards, such as “Pay a £10 library fine or take a chance.” Players progress around the board taking a typical student experience at the University – starting with halls of residence and clubs, then academic progress around the board taking in a typical student experience at the University – starting with halls of residence and clubs, then academic

For a limited period until 31 March 2004 we are offering a 10 per cent discount on the sale of University of Newcastle upon Tyne Monopoly through our Memorabilia Shop.

To order the game either write to: The Memorabilia Shop, Museum of Antiquities Building, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU enclosing a cheque for £25.21 (including postage/packing) made payable to ‘University of Newcastle upon Tyne’ or telephone/fax + 44 (0) 191 222 7684/9489 if using a credit card as payment.

To view the wide range of other University items that can be purchased through the Memorabilia Shop visit www.ncl.ac.uk/memorabilia where you can also download an order form.

Can you Help?

Have you at any point in time worked on (or conducted work related to) a dialect project called The Tyneside Linguistic Survey (TLS)? If so, the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics would like to hear from you. They have reopened and redefined the project, titled the Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyne English (NECTE) and established a website at www.ncl.ac.uk/necte.

Please contact Charyl Bowe by phone on + 44 (0) 191 222 6182 or e-mail necte@ncl.ac.uk

FORTHCOMING ALUMNI EVENTS

Please contact the Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) by phone + 44 (0) 191 222 7250, fax + 44 (0) 191 222 5905, e-mail alumni-office@ncl.ac.uk for further details on any of the events below.

19 November 2003
North of England Branch - Lecture on Recruiting Undergraduate Students by Lesley Braden, Director of the Student Recruitment Office. Contact: John Peary at johnpeary@yahoo.co.uk

14 December 2003
North of England Branch – Christmas Luncheon at the Copthorne Hotel, Newcastle. Contact: John Peary at johnpeary@yahoo.co.uk

22 January 2004
North of England Branch - Lecture on ‘Women in Roman Britain’ by Lindsey Allison-Jones, Director of University Museums. Contact: John Peary at johnpeary@yahoo.co.uk

12 February 2004
North of England Branch - Lecture on ‘Reclamation of the Durham Coast’ by Neil Benson of Durham County Council. Contact: John Peary at johnpeary@yahoo.co.uk

6–9 March 2004
Royal Union of 94 Alumni in conjunction with the Founders and Benefactors Weekend. Contact Geoff Braunt at gbbraunt@hotmail.com

20 March 2004
Alumni Enterprise Forum – A special one-day forum for alumni thinking about starting a technology-based business. The event is being organised jointly with the University of Durham. Visit the website at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/enterprise for further information or register your early interest by contacting DARO.

1 May 2004
SCAN Anniversary Reunion – All former students and staff who have participated in SCAN (Student Community Action Newcastle) projects over the past 30 years are invited to attend. Contact details on page 20.

19 June 2004
Convocation and Alumni Reunion Weekend – Reunion parties and individual events in conjunction with joining us should contact DARO at alumni-office@ncl.ac.uk. Full details of the weekend programme will be published online at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni early in 2004.

1 June 2004
MB 85 1979 Reunion – This event is organized by Dr Ian Jenkins and Mr Malcolm Price. Contact them for details via DARO

3 July 2004
MB 85 1984 Reunion – This event is organized by Dr Peter Mattinson. Contact Peter Mattinson for details via DARO

2004 (date to be confirmed)
BSc Speech 1983 – This event is organized by Sarah Hassnip, née Greening. Contact Sarah at hassnip@topworld.com

Forthcoming events are listed at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/events
1980s

Nader BARSOLMI (PhD Engineering Mathematics 1980) now works in universities in Australia, Malaysia and Egypt since graduating. He is the author of two books and numerous research papers.

David BOWSELL (BA German 1984) was re-elected Vice-Chairman of the higher education section of Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft Berlin (an educational trade union) and Chairman of the Regional Association of Language Teachers in Higher Education Berlin-Brandenburg in 2002.

Mark DYTHAM (BA Architecture 1985) was awarded an MBE in 2000 for services to British architecture in Japan.

David FIELD (BSc Mechanical Engineering 1985) sits on the Association for Project Management Project Manager of the Year Award for 2000.

Paul MELLER (MB BS 1985) has taken over as Chairman of the reformed Ramsay Consultants Committee. He has worked as a Consultant at Cherry Knowle Hospital, Sunderland since 1995.

Rebatea MUSHINGA (MSc Structural Engineering 1987) now works on her own consulting firm in 1999, which has grown tremendously.

John ROBINSON (MSc Organic Petroleum 1984) has been appointed Senior Director, Bioeconomy Europe for PGS Pharma Services, a premier provider of innovative drug discovery and development solutions.

Julian ROSS (MSc Transport Engineering & Operations 1986) is either at the freightbridge Railway Station – designed by his father, and operating in 2000 – or into the Royal Scots Dragon Guards. He has been in the Balkans, Germany and Canada.

Harren JONES (MSc Civil & Environmental Engineering 1987) is currently training the UK Construction Industry to make it more Internet-based Project Collaboration Tools effectively.

Qasim Zaman KHAN (MBA 1997) was appointed to the National Assembly for Wales in 2001. He has worked in the pharmaceutical industry in 2001.

Melissa JAMES (BSc Countryside Management 1999) joined BMA Sandhurst and Thatcham in 2000. She has worked at the Royal Scots Dragon Guards. She has been in the Balkans, Germany and Canada.

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