

Question Time



Professor Michael Clarke

1 What do you do?

I have been Vice-Principal since January 2003 and am now about to retire. Before that I was Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for external relations and, before that, Head of the School of Public Policy.

2 What do you really do?

An enormous range of things! Anything to do with the internal management of the University as well as leading on our external relations.

3 How do you get to work?

By car.

4 What's the best aspect of your job?

Its variety and the people I work with – both inside and outside the University.

5 What's the worst aspect of your job?

Dealing with silly and unimportant issues which have been blown into prominence for one reason or another – and colleagues who ought to know better.

6 What would you like to be doing in five years' time?

Well dug into my forthcoming retirement, happy and fulfilled.

7 What do you most enjoy about University life?

The privilege of working in such an environment, its people and its contribution to the world at large.

8 How do you unwind?

Gardening or (probably mutually exclusive!) time with my wife Angela, children and grandchildren.

9 Which book is on your bedside table?

'Madresfield'. The history of a fascinating Worcestershire house which has been in the same family for 1,000 years and whose current occupant is a friend of ours.

10 What is your favourite tippie?

A glass of good wine or a concoction my father used to refer to as 'a Vicarage special'.

11 What makes a good night out?

Listening to good music – orchestral, choral or with ballet.

12 Which animal are you most like?

I can't begin to imagine!

13 Describe your favourite holiday?

Going somewhere interesting with lots to look at and learn about.

14 What is your favourite sport?

Gardening and running – from one meeting to another!

15 Who are the top three people on your fantasy dinner party list?

Robert Peel, William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli.

16 If you were a superhero/superheroine, who would you be?

Superman, of course.

17 What has been the highlight of your life, to date?

I don't think there is one thing. My extraordinary good fortune to have done a huge number of interesting and satisfying things and met/worked with extraordinary people.

18 If you could banish one thing from the world what would it be?

Big egos and all that goes with them.

19 Describe yourself in three words?

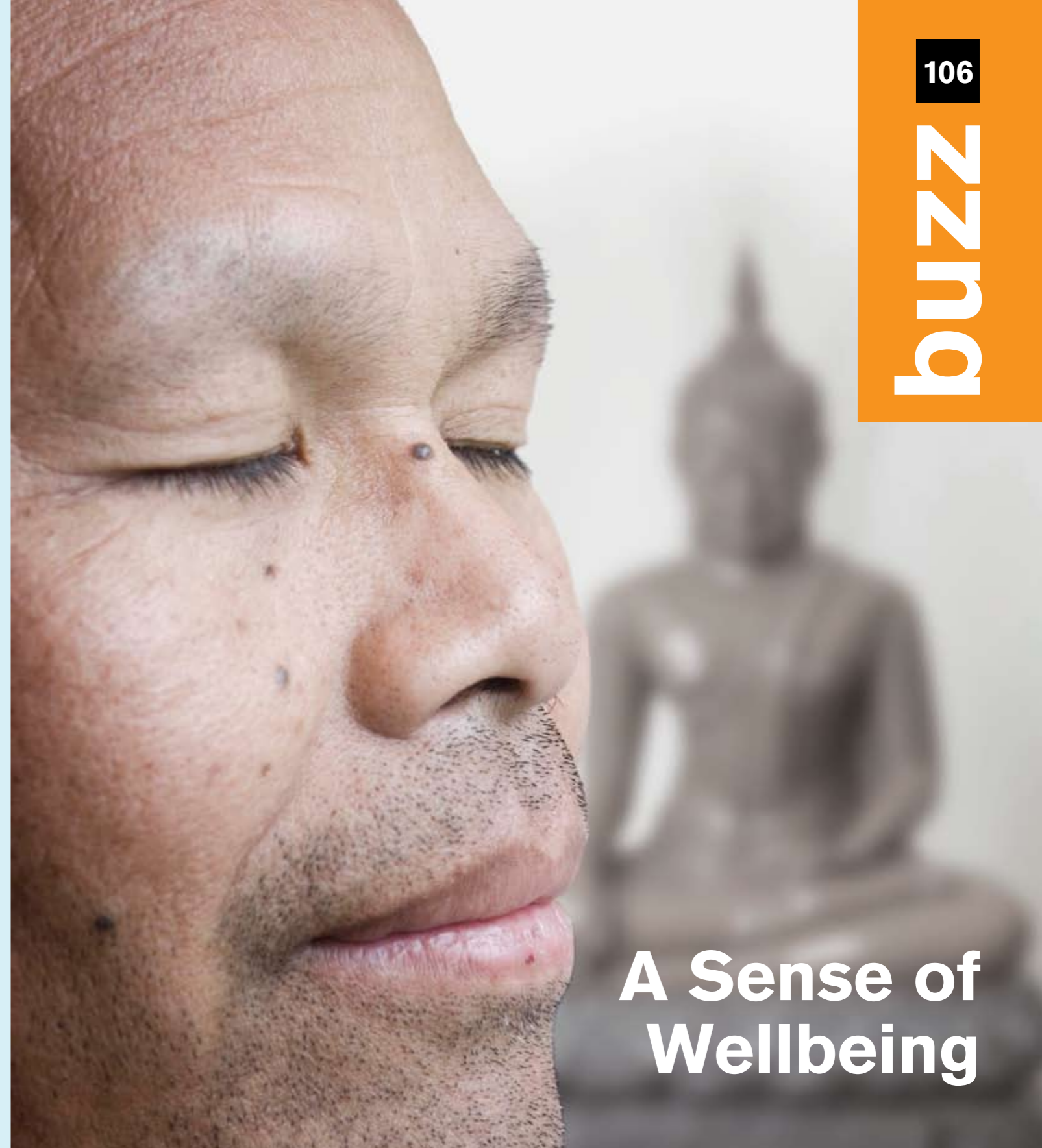
At ease with myself (four words – three is difficult).

20 What is your personal motto?

Strangely, my family motto is Gradatim per ardua ad astra (steadily through work to the stars) and remarkably like the University's. It will do!

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and finally...



A Sense of Wellbeing

August/September 2008



Beijing bound



Congregations



Question Time

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



**Q. When is a Peregrine not a Peregrine?
A. When it's a Goshawk.**

Eagle-eyed readers alerted the Buzz newsdesk after spotting that the photograph accompanying last month's article by Professor Graham Martin on the University's resident birds of prey depicted not a Peregrine Falcon but a Goshawk, a much rarer creature.

The explanation? With the only available image of Birmingham's Peregrines too fuzzy to reproduce, Buzz sought an alternative.

Design and Publications explains that the image was sourced from an online digital picture agency – which has subsequently been alerted to the error.

The correct images are shown here. Apologies to Graham – and to the Peregrines!

Once again Buzz was inundated with entries for the July competition to win Ryanair flights to Sweden and Norway. The four lucky winners are named on page 10 where you can also win tickets to the new production of *Cabaret* which begins a run at Birmingham Rep this month, or to the opening night of the Birmingham International Concert Season at Symphony Hall.

Meanwhile, thank you to everyone who has so far sent in details of their charity fundraising efforts for the feature celebrating the University's contribution to charity causes which we are hoping to run in October's issue.

If you can put together a short piece with all the relevant information and submit it to Buzz with a captioned picture, that would help to guarantee you a mention. Please send copy and pictures, as usual, to: university-buzz.bham.ac.uk

Jenni Ameghino
Editor



Peregrine Falcon



Goshawk

YOUR BUZZ

Please let us know if you want extra copies of Buzz or if you think we need to amend your distribution details.

Printed version

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News, Views, Pictures, Notices,
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Cover image: The front cover features alumnus and member of the University Chaplaincy Dr Ajahn Laow, of the Buddhavihara Temple Trust, Kings Bromley, Staffordshire. Dr Laow, who received his PhD in Theology in 2004 and is the first Buddhist monk from Thailand to achieve a qualification in Theology from Birmingham, was taking part in Wellbeing Day with colleagues from Wat Buddhavihara. Full story, pages 8–9.

2009 has been designated Year of Darwin across campus

Zoo showcase provides insight into evolution

Are you an ape? What are the advantages and disadvantages of walking upright? Which came first, blue eyes or brown eyes? What do toothbrush advertisers know about evolution?

The answers to these and many other questions were the subject of a Biosciences event at London Zoo, writes *Dr Jeremy Pritchard*. Part of the University's 'Expert lecture' series, the event attracted more than 160 students from schools across London who met staff and students from the School of Biosciences.

The students collected data from the animals which was used to construct a tree showing their evolutionary relationships. Using a computer program students were able to determine the closeness of the relationship in a range of organisms, from potoroo to penguin



and komodo dragon to cassowary. The results were largely as expected, although further research is needed to determine if Homo sapiens is really more closely related to the fruit bat than Gorilla (left).

The day finished with prizes for a quiz which had ranged from transport to Birmingham to the length of all the DNA in your body (about 210 kms since you ask). We hope to see some of these London students in our lectures next year.

Team effort for ValeFest

Hospitality and Accommodation Services staff supported the fourth annual Vale Festival, organised by students who arrange a day's musical and cultural activities including live bands, music tents, poetry, enterprise workshops, craft stalls and Guild activity, to raise money for charitable causes.

This year's festival focused on Water Aid and it is hoped that this year the money raised will exceed all previous totals. The Vale Accommodation team, the Catering, Bars and Events team at the Hub, the Conference office, Central Kitchen, Cleaning Services, Environmental Services, Security, Emergency Planning, and Portering (landscape services from Estates management) all provide essential services to make Valefest happen.

A spokesman said: 'These teams work extremely hard, over long hours to ensure that the event goes smoothly without any hitches. HAS is very proud to be part of such a worthwhile event and thanks go to all the staff who contributed.'



original thinking back and on the move

The Original Thinking campaign was present in the city again throughout July, this time celebrating student success, tying in with graduation ceremonies. The campaign highlights the University's long history and continued commitment to original research and to fostering the next generation of original thinkers.

Highlights included five liveried taxis, posters at New Street and Snow Hill train stations and booklets profiling the achievements of a selection of students past and present who have made significant achievements in fields such as politics, sport, medicine and law.

Current PhD student Angela Murray and Birmingham graduate and current staff member John Gordon featured prominently. Angela is in the third year of her PhD and is looking at ways in which to extract precious metals from road dust and other waste materials. John is co-founder of Celentyx Ltd, a pharmaceutical company that develops treatments for common diseases by finding new uses for existing drugs.

You can get your own piece of Original Thinking in the form of a bag, for sale for £1, available from Aston Webb Reception (while stocks last), and read more on the inspiring student success stories at www.original.bham.ac.uk.

Staff members Angela Murray and John Gordon whose names appear in the Original Thinking livery on five Birmingham taxi cabs. Staff member Karen Cochrane is spotted with an Original Thinking bag shortly before a degree ceremony.



Prize graduands receive awards

Two talented University graduands received prizes for their outstanding contribution to student life.

Medical student James Fullerton received the Chancellor's Prize 2008, when he graduated from the MB ChB (Graduate Entry) programme. The prize is awarded to an outstanding mature student on behalf of the Chancellor, Sir Dominic Cadbury.

James has already been awarded several prizes for his achievements on his course. A dedicated student, charity campaigner and researcher, James spent his elective period working in the South Pacific, where he also worked on a medical ward.

Dr Kate Thomas a senior tutor (welfare) from the University's Medical School, said: 'James combines scholarship with a warm, engaging personality and a willingness to work for the good of others: patients, fellow students and the University. He will make an outstanding doctor.'

Helen Nanjala Nyabola received the Vice-Chancellor's Prize 2008 when she graduated with a degree in African Studies and Political Science. Each year the prize is awarded to the best all-round student.

Born in Kenya, Helen has worked as a student mentor and volunteer, contributing to building connections between Birmingham and Africa to investigate standards of teaching in schools across three African countries. She has also visited different countries to teach HIV/AIDS awareness. She also published a series of articles calling for peace and reconciliation in Kenya.

Rev up for road race 12

The annual University Road Race in aid of the Acorns Children's Hospice in Selly Oak is due to take place on campus on October 19.

Now in its twelfth year, the race has so far raised £55,000 to help with the hospice's work. Last year, around 600 runners took part and it is hoped that even more people will put on their running shoes this time.

As usual, there are two events – the 5km race, which starts at 11.30am and a 2km fun run and walk at 12.15pm. Both routes are the same as last year. Race Organiser Peter Hinton says: 'Everyone can get involved in the fun run, it's for people of all ages, you can go at your own pace, so bring granny and the kids and buy a number for the dog as well!'

Entry forms will be available at the Munrow Sports Centre, Chemical Engineering or Aston Webb Reception. For more information visit: www.uni5k.org.uk



New Registrar appointed

Lee Sanders, from the University of Durham, has been appointed Registrar and Secretary at Birmingham.

He will head the University's unified administration and support services of more than 3,500 members of staff across central services and academic Colleges, and takes up his new role on 6 October. He will lead the team of senior administrative officers in crucial areas such as finance, estates, human resources, academic services, development and alumni relations, planning, corporate

relations, hospitality and accommodation services, IT services and legal services, to ensure the smooth-running of the University.

Mr Sanders is currently Registrar and Secretary at the University of Durham, its Chief Operating Officer responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for university business, a post he has held since March 2003.

He said: *'I am excited about joining the excellent team at Birmingham and look forward to working with colleagues to contribute to the University's bright future.'*

£9m for research into Third Sector activities

The University is celebrating securing £9 million to jointly lead a new Third Sector Research Centre.

The world-class centre, which will be led by the University's Professor Pete Alcock, in partnership with Professor John Mohan at the University of Southampton, will receive the cash over five years. Its purpose is to conduct research and analysis to strengthen the evidence base for the entire Third Sector, including charities, social enterprises and small community organisations. It will work to deliver research into the effectiveness and impact of Third Sector organisations – those that fall between the public and private sectors.

Professor Pete Alcock said: *'This is an exciting new opportunity to provide an extensive and robust research resource for the Third Sector and to work closely with both policy makers and practitioners in building capacity and engagement. We are pleased to have been chosen to run the Centre and are looking forward commencing work in September.'*

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, Office of the Third Sector and The Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Centre is another example of the Government's commitment to support Third Sector organisations.

Getting the best from people

Staff responsible for promoting Continuing Professional Development courses at the University exhibited at the Midlands Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Conference at the ICC.

The conference *'Getting the Best From People'* attracted business people, HR professionals, speakers, exhibitors and independent specialists from a wide variety of business sectors in the region.

CPD Manager, Jayne Sharples, said: *'The conference provided us with an excellent opportunity to meet local business people and HR professionals who are interested in finding out more about what is on offer here.'*



Sandy Purewal, Birmingham Business School's Business Development Manager, and Carrie Bennett, School Marketing Manager for the School of Public Policy, advise visitors at the University stand.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Record numbers at HE event

The University held its first Higher Education Convention (HEC) on campus last month, *writes Liz Murphy, Director of Student Recruitment and Outreach.* The application process for University usually starts in year 12 (lower sixth): secondary schools take pupils to a central location where they have the opportunity to meet recruitment staff from most universities, ask general questions and pick up literature.

In just two days at our HEC, we welcomed 13,000 prospective students – together with 520 teachers from 145 schools, of which 118 had not attended a UB open day previously. During the week prior to the HEC, we also welcomed an additional 13,000 prospective applicants from 104 schools during our regular June open days.

ChemEng award

Final-year Chemical Engineering PhD student Angela Murray has won the prestigious International Precious Metal Institute Student Award. The annual prize is awarded to research which advances the science and understanding of metal chemistry, Metallurgy and catalysts. The prize has not been awarded to a British University in more than 20 years. Angela is studying the Recovery of Platinum Group Metals from Urban Waste.

Celebrations for gap-year students

More than 60 students celebrated the success of the West Midlands Year in Industry scheme with a showcase event. The initiative is run by the Engineering Development Trust and provides talented young people with paid, degree-relevant work placements in the year out before or during their university course. Estelle Rowe, Area Director of The Year in Industry, said: *'The event was a great success and many of these students look set to have extremely successful careers in engineering.'*

New hospital – family fun day

Summer sees the mid-point in construction of the new hospital. To celebrate this milestone, University Hospital Birmingham NHS Trust in partnership with Balfour Beatty, Consort Healthcare and the University will be hosting a 'family fun day' on Saturday 30 August to showcase the new building and to give something back to staff, patients and the local community. The fun day will provide the opportunity for people to have a look around parts of the new building, while also enjoying a day of family orientated fun and entertainment.

When graduation is a toddle

Meet the youngest graduates in the land. These gifted students from the Elms and the Oaks day nurseries received their very own degrees last month.

47 bright young hopefuls swapped white boards for mortar boards and fancy dress for ceremonial robes when they celebrated graduating from the University's nurseries.

The little graduands, who are all aged four, received degree certificates from Geoff Pringle, Director of Hospitality and Accommodation Services, to celebrate the end of their nursery education before they start school.

Michelle Bates, Manager of The Oaks Nursery said: *'This is a proud moment for children, parents and staff. Not only is it a chance to celebrate the youngsters' hard work and to recognise their achievements, but it's an opportunity for the adults to appreciate the fine young children who stand before us'*

Tasmin Butt, Manager of the Elms Day Nursery, whose mother helps to make the mini gowns, adds: *'It's time to bid a fond farewell as they continue along their journey of education. I will be very sad to see them leave, but they will always hold a place in my heart. I wish them well for their future.'*



Fun Day

Members of staff from The Hub on the Vale are organising a Fun Day on Saturday August 30 to raise money for the Heart and Lung Transplant Fund. Activities include cake stall, tombola, treasure hunt and mini-triathlon.

Buy a brick to save Winterbourne pond

The Friends of Winterbourne Botanic Garden are running a Buy-a-Brick campaign to help to raise funds for the restoration of the pond.

For £20 you can have your initials carved in the brick which will then be set in the new courses of wall around the Edwardian pond. According to Head Gardener Lee Hale, the pond is known as a Dipping Pool from the days when gardeners would dip their watering cans to refresh the Kitchen Garden.

The refurbishment of the pond is expected to cost around £2,300. So far, £300 has been raised and Winterbourne staff and friends are keen to spread word of the brick sponsorship scheme. All bricks are hand-carved on site by Dave Barnes a member of the 'Shapeshifters' stone-carving group based at Winterbourne.

'The fish and wildlife in the pond have been struggling with low water levels due to a bad leak and it's about time we gave them a new home that will last for at least another 104 years,' says Lee.

You can have a brick carved for a loved one, friends, alumni, students or in memoriam.

This is a limited opportunity to secure your name in Winterbourne history and there are a limited number of bricks available.

Call the Garden reception on 414 3832 for more information.



A newt is camouflaged against one of the new bricks

A key change at the Barber

Built almost 70 years ago for 'the encouragement and study of art and music', refurbishments to the Barber Institute of Fine Arts will restore run-down sections of this Art Deco gem to its former glory, *writes David King, Head of Development Services, Development and Alumni Relations Office.*

In its distinguished history, the hall has seen concerts by artists of international calibre, including Dame Janet Baker, Emma Kirkby, and the Academy of Ancient Music, and the premieres of many new works. It has also given students important live performance experience, with many giving 'dry runs' of their final-year recital pieces on the Barber stage.

To ensure its survival for future generations, a £250,000 refurbishment of the hall will be undertaken this summer, improving the look, feel and comfort of the 350-seat venue while retaining its Art Deco aesthetic. The Barber Trust has contributed £110,000 to the project; the remainder being donated by alumni and other interested groups.

'At the moment, the hall lacks the amenities that audiences expect when they attend a concert today,' explains Peyton and Barber Professor of Music, Colin Timms. *'It has been well used for many years, but it is in much*

need of a refurbishment that will make it a more comfortable venue for audience and performers alike.'

The floor of the concert hall, stage and wings will be restored; the custom-made original seating reupholstered, and the period plaster ceiling and walls repaired and redecorated as part of the three-month project.

'It was described soon after its opening as "a most beautiful and comfortable little concert-room," says Colin, *'and that is what we are aiming to recreate.'*

With a refurbished concert hall ready in October the Barber Institute will live up to the vision of its founder, combining visual arts and musical performances in a uniquely elegant environment.

- The University is running a seat-naming programme to support refurbishment of the concert hall.
- Naming a seat for ten years costs £1,000 and is a great way to support the future of the Barber.
- If you would like to give, please contact Andrew Harris on 0121 414 2708.

Birmingham...

10,708 athletes, 302 gold medals, 37 venues, 28 sports. Five Olympic rings...and three Birmingham Alumni. The Beijing Olympics 2008 kick off this month and the University is proudly supporting three former students who are competing at the biggest event in the sporting calendar. **By Anna Mitchell**



Paul Manning, 33

Degree: BSc Geology, 1996 Sport: Cycling

Paul Manning is an Olympic veteran. And he has his mind on only one thing for Beijing: *'Winning! To go with the ambition of winning and then coming second is a massive disappointment, that is the way we think and feel about our competitions within British cycling.'*

Paul's cycling achievements include two World Track Championship Gold Medals, a Commonwealth Gold and Olympic Bronze and Silver medals for Team Pursuit cycling.

He also won a Gold medal for individual pursuit cycling at the Melbourne Commonwealth Games.

Specific personal goal for the Olympics: *To win!!*

Training routine: *We'll concentrate on blocks of work on the road, then the track leading up to the games – an approach that proved very successful at the World Championships this year in Manchester.*

Preparation for Beijing: *Same sort of approach we've used over the last few years with slight tweaks as we continue to learn more about ourselves and the event.*

And another thing: *Paul won University Sport Birmingham's first Sports Achievement Award in 2007.*

Simon Mantell, 24

Degree: BCom Commerce, 2007 Sport: Hockey

In qualifying for the Beijing Games, the Great Britain Hockey Team beat India in the final, and as a result India will not be at the Olympics for the first time in over 80 years. Booting India out of the qualifying rounds is just the latest in a string of sporting successes that hockey player Simon Mantell can claim credit for.

Simon will compete at his first Olympics as part of the Great Britain Men's Hockey Team. *'Winning the qualification tournament in Chile was fantastic – there was a lot of pressure on us as we had to win to qualify.'*

Beijing won't be Simon's first international tournament – that came at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne where he scored with his first touch.

Simon first picked up a hockey stick when he was four and he played for his local club Taunton Vale HC. He was the top goal-scorer in the 2006 World Cup, when he competed for England. He has had 40 England Caps and 18 GB Caps.

Specific personal goal for the Olympics: *To come back with a medal, and to score some goals while we're out there.*

Training routine: *Since qualifying in March, we've been training at Bisham Abbey. We've been doing a lot of conditioning running to ensure we have good fitness levels going into the summer.*

Preparation for Beijing: *We have a fitness programme which is designed to make sure we peak physically for major events.*

And another thing: *It's a family thing – Simon's hockey playing brother Richard will also represent Team GB.*



to... Beijing



Naomi Folkard, 24

Degree: BMus Music, 2005 Sport: Archery

'I'm really looking forward to the atmosphere in the competition venue, it will be amazing. Just being involved in the greatest sporting event of them all will be fantastic.'

Naomi Folkard is currently ranked first in the UK in women's archery and when she competes in Beijing it will be the second time the 24 year-old has practised her sport at an Olympics.

In Athens in 2004, Naomi was the youngest member of the Great Britain Olympic Archery Squad, where she finished 11th. Now as Beijing approaches, she is keen to improve on that performance, both in the individual and team events.

Since her Olympic debut, Naomi has continued to target success with pinpoint accuracy. In 2007 she won individual bronze at the World Field Archery Championships and individual silver at the European Indoor Target Championships. Taking gold as part of the women's recurve team at the European Outdoor Target Championships made her the first British recurve archer to win medals in all three disciplines at European or World level in one year.

Specific personal goal for the Olympics: *In the individual event, I'd be happy to finish in the top eight.*

Training routine: *I shoot for 4–6 hours a day, run 2–3 times a week and do strength and conditioning twice a week.*

Preparation for Beijing: *I'll shoot a bit less and concentrate on the quality of my shooting.*

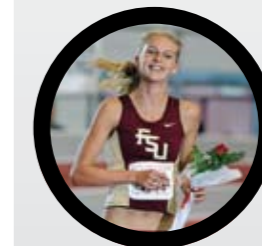
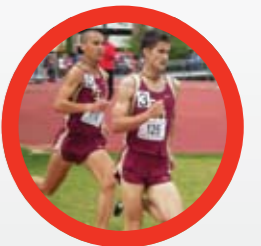
And another thing: *Naomi has two strings to her bow. As well as archery, she is an accomplished violin player.*

Ones to watch for in 2012...

Luke Gunn

Luke, who graduated in 2006 (Sports Material Science), set a personal best in June of 8:28:48. Beating a previous personal best, Gunn believes he can still beat the Olympic A time of 8:24:60.

Focussing on Beijing, Luke secured a top two finish, but didn't make the qualifying time. Luke will find out at the end of July if he has done enough to qualify.



Hannah England

Hannah, aged 21, who is studying for BSc in Biochemistry, is currently the fastest woman in Britain over 1,500m after smashing her personal best in June by six seconds to cross the line with an Olympic A qualifying time of 4.06.19.

She has recently returned from a year at Florida State University in America, during which she collected the National Collegiate AA 1 mile and 1,500m.

Hannah was one of the first young middle-distance athletes to be selected to be part of Dame Kelly Holmes' mentoring programme *'On Camp with Kelly.'*

Louise Hazel

Louise, aged 22, is a heptathlete and a University of Birmingham Sports Scholar, currently ranked fourth in the UK.

She made her senior GB debut in 2004 at the age of 18 when she competed at the European Cup Combined Events in Holland.

Her career highlight to date came in 2006 when she was selected to compete at the European Championships in Gothenburg where she collected no fewer than five personal bests.

Louise graduated this year with a degree in French Studies.



Countdown to degree congregations



The final fanfare has played out this year's summer degree congregations, but 'operation graduation' continues to roll, with plans for December's ceremonies already in progress. **Anna Dingley** – who scaled Old Joe with honorary graduate the late Fred Dibnah during the 2005 congregations – discovers how all-encompassing the event is for the University.

'Today is a celebration of academic achievement and the moment at which we look to the future.'

*Professor Michael Sterling,
Vice-Chancellor*

It takes 4,000 students, 1,000 staff, 16 ceremonies, 17 honorary graduates, six lunches, one dinner and six days to host the summer degree congregations. No wonder these extraordinary events take at least six months of planning by a University-wide team led by Academic Services and the Events Team.

The BUAFTA-nominated Examinations and Timetabling team explains: *'The ceremony is the ultimate celebration of our students'*

achievements – a day they and their loved ones will remember for the rest of their lives and the team make sure it is remembered for the right reasons.

'Without rehearsal, the team manages to organise not only the students and their families, but any number of Corporate Services and the academic staff, for a flawless event.'

The ceremonies, which take place in the Great Hall every July, are a seminal time for graduating students and their families, while honorary doctorates are awarded to eminent figures, such as one of this year's recipients: poet Benjamin Zephaniah. From the ceremonial robes and mace to the throwing of mortarboards and the popping of Champagne corks, these defining occasions showcase the best of the University.

Kirsty Mack, University Events Manager, says: *'Congregations involve every corner of the campus. Everybody is working towards the same goal – and they make it happen. It's a unique, special week.'*

With this reputation to maintain, it is essential that the congregations run like clockwork. However, any events of this scale are always subject to the unusual – guests arriving by helicopter – or the unpredictable – 2007's event saw the worst flooding in 20 years. *'Expect the unexpected,'* jokes Michael Davis, Examinations and Congregations Development Officer, as he, colleague Julie Scarratt, Assistant Director, Academic and Student Administration; and the rest of the team behind the scenes ensure the show goes on without a hitch. Welcome to the world of degree congregations!



Behind the scenes

Edited highlights of the run-up to the big event:

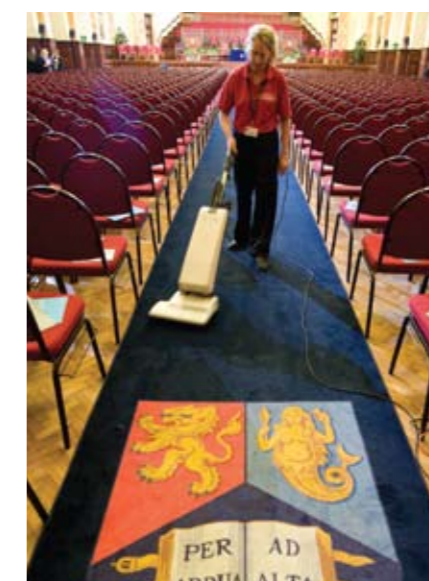
- Planning begins with Michael Davis and the rest of the degree congregations team in Academic Services inviting eligible students to the July ceremonies via the student portal.
- The Nominations Committee meets to discuss potential honorary graduates, which are later approved and signed off by Senate.
- Kirsty Mack and Eleanor Leftwich, of the Events Team, organise arrangements for honorary graduates, degree lunches, dinners and marquees, working closely alongside the Vice-Chancellor's Suite and colleagues from Hospitality and Accommodation Services, among many others.
- Academic Services begins work on processions and approaches people to take part, including school staff, Heads of School and members of Council and Court. The office also organises gown hire and photography.
- Accommodation for honorary graduates is organised with Conference Park, while Central Printing works on the hundreds of invitations required for the degree dinners along with the numerous items of stationery required by the Events Team.
- Speeches for Heads of Schools, orators and the Chancellor are prepared.
- Certificates are prepared for the honorary graduates.
- Degree dinner tasting takes place at Central Kitchen, Head chef Mark Houghton prepares menus to present to the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Sterling, and his wife Wendy. Flowers are also picked.
- Ceremonial robes, including those worn by the Chancellor, Sir Dominic Cadbury, are maintained and stored by Michael and his team.
- Congregations brochures are produced, staffing arrangements are finalised, the campus is groomed to perfection by Grounds and Gardens and porters set up the seating while Security prepares for an influx of visitors.
- **Degree congregations begin!**



clockwise from top: Security officers prepare to greet visitors; Benjamin Zephaniah brings his inimitable style to proceedings; Michael Davis; Cleaning staff at work between ceremonies; Robing in the Rotunda; Time to celebrate; Kirsty Mack signals the start of a ceremony.

Facts about congregations

- 6,000 glasses of Champagne are drunk
- 4,000 portions of strawberries and cream are served
- Three minutes – the fastest time to robe a graduand
- 16 honorary graduands and their guests and relatives are entertained by the VC
- 20, 800 programmes are produced for ceremonies – that's 249,600 printed pages
- 55 students graduated at the University's first congregations in 1901 – compared to over 4,700 today
- Four cameras capture 96 hours of footage and DVDs of the ceremonies are sent to all four corners of the globe
- The University Chancellor, Sir Dominic Cadbury, takes 2,240 steps in 16 processions
- Around 4,500 official portraits are taken
- 900 mortarboards a day are tossed into the air in celebration by the University's newest graduates!



Win tickets to Mahler at Symphony Hall

Birmingham can be justly proud of the Birmingham International Concert Season at Town Hall and Symphony Hall. It is the most substantial season of visiting orchestras and musicians outside London, and this year welcomes Sir Simon Rattle, The Royal Opera and Antonio Pappano, Mitsuko Uchida, Leif Ove Andsnes and the Tokyo Quartet among others.

Buzz has been offered a pair of tickets to the Opening Night of the new season, a rare chance to hear Mahler's thunderous and extravagant Third Symphony, on Tuesday 7 October at 7.30pm at Symphony Hall. Ivan Fischer conducts the Budapest Festival Orchestra with the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus (Ladies) and Youth Chorus (seniors) and soloist Birgit Remmert.



To enter, please answer the following question:

Q: In what year was Gustav Mahler born?

Email the answer to the following question to: university-buzz@bham.ac.uk (or send to the address in Your Buzz on page two) by the competition closing date of **Thursday August 14**.

* For further details of this concert and all events at Town Hall and Symphony Hall, visit www.thsh.co.uk

Photograph by Alan Wood

Win tickets to Cabaret

Cabaret and TV celebrity Wayne Sleep is to star in the multi award-winning hit West End production of Cabaret which opens its UK tour at Birmingham Repertory Theatre this month and the theatre has very kindly given Buzz a pair of tickets for Saturday 30 August at 7.30pm for one lucky reader.

The 'sensational' double Olivier Award Winner and Variety Club Awards Best Musical turns Weimar Berlin of 1931 into a divine haven of decadence, its extraordinary and morally ambiguous inhabitants determined to keep up appearances as the real world – outside the comfortable sanctuary of the cabaret – prepares for the nightmarish chaos of war.

And at its heart is the legendary Sally Bowles who performs nightly at the infamous Kit Kat Klub in 'A shimmering masterpiece of a show guaranteed night after night! It's divine decadence darling!'

Since its Broadway premiere in 1966 and the famous movie version, with Liza Minnelli, Michael York and Joel Grey, Cabaret has won a staggering number of stage and screen awards including eight Oscars, seven BAFTAs and 13 Tonys.

To enter simply email the answer to the following question to: university-buzz@bham.ac.uk (or send to the address in Your Buzz on page two) by the competition closing date of **Thursday August 14**. Usual terms and conditions apply.

Q. Which reality TV programme did Wayne Sleep appear in?

- A. Celebrity Big Brother
- B. I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here
- C. Strictly Come Dancing

Competition winners

Congratulations to the winners of last month's competition to win Ryanair flights: Sam Beard, Lorraine Day, Susan Russell and Pauline Tomkins.



Photograph of Amy Nuttall in The West End production



On show: Ancestor 1 (right), Scorched Flats and Girl in a Hat, (far right) Reading Girl (below)



More to find on sculpture stroll

If the rain holds off for long enough, now is a perfect time to explore the beautiful Edgbaston campus and learn more about the sculpture that resides there, writes **Clare Mullet, Assistant University Curator**.

The Campus Sculpture Trail offers a taste of the impressive works around campus and has plenty of background information on each sculpture featured, along with a map to guide you around the site and great pictures to help you to discover each work of art.

The outdoor collection, including Birmingham's oldest sculpture – Equestrian Statue of George I – at the East Gate and the monumental, futuristic Faraday at the West gate, has been expanded to include Anthony Caro's *Scorched Flats* which hugs the ground outside the Main Library.

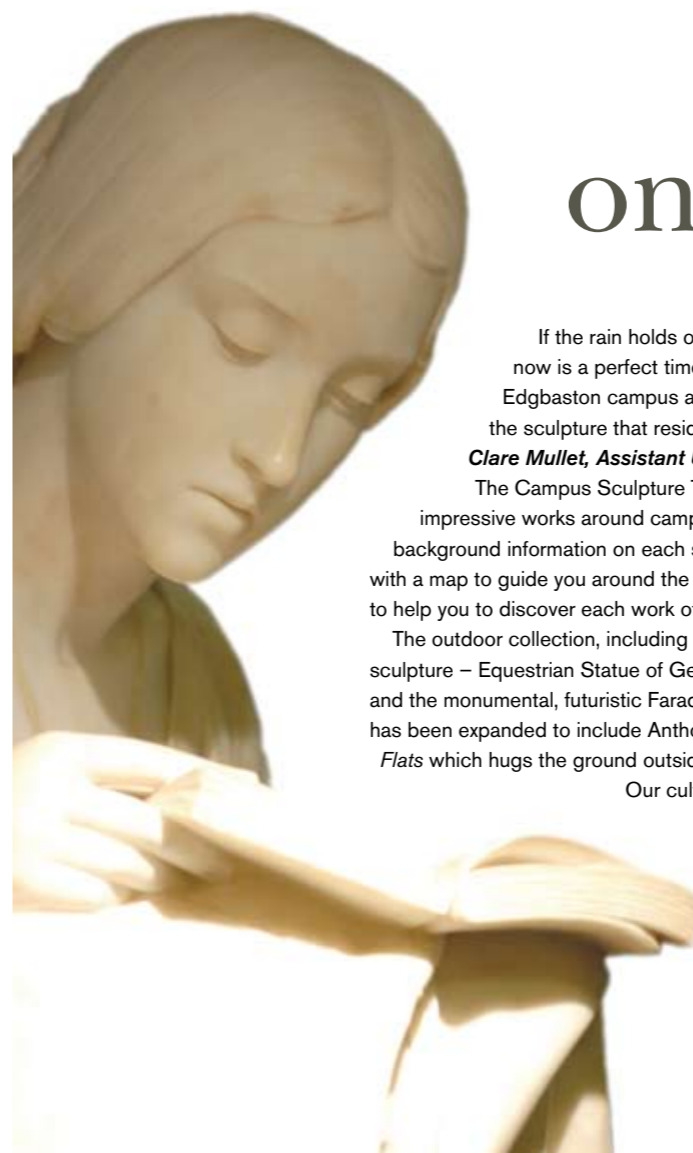
Our cultural stroll also now includes sculpture indoors, taking us into the Aston Webb building, the Medical School and Special Collections in the Main Library to introduce works by

acclaimed sculptors Alfred Drury, Jacob Epstein and Pietro Magni.

The collection is richly diverse, offering something for most tastes. The dates of the sculptures span nearly 300 years, the subjects range from a king to mermaid, and there are ornate carvings in contrast to abstracted geometric shapes. The locations of the sculptures are also varied, from Wrestlers fighting in the shrubbery to the Portrait Figures carved high above the entrance to the Aston Webb building.

The sculpture on campus is for everyone and it serves many purposes. *Scorched Flats* has been used as a sun-bed, *Ancestor 1* a toddler's climbing frame, *Faraday* is a good meeting place and the *Mermaid* is often dressed up in an impressive outfit to advertise a big night at the Guild. Some pieces you see everyday and others you may not have even noticed yet, so the trail is designed to introduce them all and I hope that you will enjoy exploring the range of styles, subjects and shapes of sculpture on your journey across the campus.

The new leaflet should be available from September at various points around campus including Aston Webb Reception and the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. If you would like to receive a copy please contact University Collections on 414 6750 or download a copy from www.collections.bham.ac.uk



By Day...By Night

Geoff Dolman



By day, I am the Health and Safety Officer for the Metallurgy and Materials Science buildings on campus. I came to the University 12 years ago after working at ICI and started in the Functional Materials Group of the Department. I still have a role within the group today although I am now full time in Health and Safety. My job is very varied, being dictated by day-to-day events in the department, but might, for example, involve dealing with new regulations or liaising with the Fire Service.

I live in Dorridge with my partner Lauren and our year-old daughter Violet.



By night, I have my own record label – Static Caravan, which I set up eight years ago and which seems to have gone from strength to strength despite being a 'spare time' pursuit.

I've always been into music. When I'd just arrived in Birmingham 15 years ago, I was heavily involved in the city's music scene and the label grew around that. I produce and release seven-inch singles – not for the money so much but to have something local; that feeds back into the community. That said, I have produced around 150 records and recently sold licences to labels in America and Japan.

I am sent about 20 demos each week and I try to listen to them all. I work on instinct, so if I like a band, and if it's good enough, I'll work with it. It's an interdisciplinary process. It's ever-more important to work with synchronicity: placing music into television, film or any media. If you've heard the track on the recent NHS 'Stop Smoking' Campaign – that's one of our most recent placements.

There are always highlights but a couple of occasions stand out particularly. I remember the Green Man Fest when Tunng, the first band I signed, was playing. I was crammed at the side of the stage with a load of other people and it was hot and noisy, and I just remember thinking, 'This is amazing!' DJing for the first time in front of 8,000 people at Sonar in Barcelona was pretty mind-blowing too!



DJ John Peel sports a Static Caravan T-shirt at a gig.

All's well that ends well



Clockwise from top:

Do try this at home: Mark McGill, Head Chef of The Hub, tempts visitors with tasty snacks and culinary tips.

Growing together: From left: Jude Fildes and Abby Gulliver, from Winterbourne Botanic Garden with Win Kyi, of Student Recruitment.

Peace of mind: Staff from the Centre of Excellence in Interdisciplinary Mental Health keep visitors up to date with the latest developments.

Play on: Ruth, from the University Music Society, leads the String Quartet in entertaining visitors to the marquee.

The weather may have been dismal but the University's third annual Wellbeing Day brought a welcome ray of sunshine to Chancellor's Court last month.

Crowds of staff flocked to the now familiar big white marquee throughout the day to enjoy a feast of activities designed to support, stimulate and excite.

The event was launched by Professor Lawrence Young, Head of the College of Medical and Dental Sciences. Part of a whole week of activities intended to help staff to 'balance the scales between life and work', the day-long programme featured a broad range of exhibitors from inside and outside the University.

Stalls included the Lapworth Museum of Geology, University Collections, HR Staff Benefits, the Pensions Office, UHB Donor Co-ordinators, St Mary's Hospice and West Midlands Police and Fire representatives. There were opportunities to try a range of activities including a session in a massage chair under the direction of David from Well Naturally at the Munrow Sports Centre, healthy salads from HAS Catering, demonstrations of the Alexander Technique and manicures. The relaxing ambiance was enhanced by the University Music Society's string quartet.

One particularly popular stall was the University Chaplaincy and Buddhist Monks, led by Dr Ajahn Laow,

of the Buddhavihara Temple Trust, Kings Bromley, Staffordshire. Liz Murphy, Director of UK Student Recruitment, has spent the last 12 months attending a weekly Buddhism course run by the Chaplaincy.

'I go nightly on Tuesday evenings. I have found relaxation and peace. You meet friendly people in a lovely atmosphere,' she said.

Organiser David Harrison said: 'We are delighted that we have more than 1,000 people coming here even on a miserable day like today. There have been some real hits this year, particularly the University Collections. We are also especially pleased to welcome St Mary's Hospice as we are building links with them through staff and student volunteering partnerships.'

He added: 'Next year, we hope to have a proper academic discussion around well-being that is a collaboration between all Colleges.'

Highs and lows of poetry in Motion

Are we happy being happy?
Jenni Ameghino talks to the Poet Laureate at the 30th Baggs Memorial Lecture.

Are you familiar with Leicester Square on a Friday night?, Andrew Motion inquires – although he could just as easily have said Broad Street, Birmingham.

Bouncers at bar doors and drug deals in dark alleys? Spilled pints and broken glasses? Neon signs, laddish behaviour and hen-party revellers slumped on pavements minus their shoes?

Whatever vodka-laced cocktails of human excess spring to mind, the Poet Laureate presents his own Hogarthian vision while contemplating why so many people, 'mostly aged 25 and under' are apt to be found 'off their faces, by one means or another' in Britain's towns and cities at weekends.

Whether it is human nature to be happy or sad forms the substance of Motion's address as he delivers the 2008 Baggs Memorial Lecture to a packed Great Hall.

He is deeply troubled, he says, by the current frenzy of self-pleasing, this 'desire to lapse into unconsciousness through drink and drugs; this sickening-up-ness, which you don't have to be from Tunbridge Wells to find disgusting. They have the NHS, reasonably-paid jobs, political and commercial structure in their lives, they pay nothing for their schooling – for the most part. So why do they seek oblivion?'

Perhaps such dis-ease is symptomatic of a society in which the demand for happiness has reached unprecedented levels. 'Happiness is no longer dependent on happenstance,' Motion observes. Instead we are surrounded by images of the unattainably upbeat – 'the iconic smiley face...Happy Days, Happy Hour...' Could it be

that our expectation to be happy has exceeded our ability to achieve it?

Describing happiness as the 'most desirable state, and the most elusive,' the poet embarks on a meticulously-researched – if somewhat academic – journey through the history of happiness as documented by the great thinkers, philosophers and writers – Aristotle, Locke, Pope, Rousseau, Byron, Keats...

'I fear I have made the talk too serious,' he frets over a glass of wine beforehand, admitting that given the prevailing mood of his work is frequently 'bad weather and bleak conclusions', he wondered: 'why me?' when he received the invitation to deliver the lecture. 'I know that being Poet Laureate brings responsibilities as well as benefits but was this,' he quips, 'a kind of dare?'

'Happiness is no longer dependent on happenstance'

Anyone anticipating the high-octane entertainment produced by some previous Baggs speakers – including personalities as diverse as Adam Hart-Davies, and Maureen Lipman – might feel disappointed. Yet why should a man whose professional purpose since 1999 has been to document the life and times of the nation through poetry be expected

The Baggs Memorial Lecture began in 1976. Thomas Baggs was an alumnus of the University who went on to become a teacher, journalist and war correspondent before pursuing a successful career in advertising and publicity for the USA automobile industry. When he died in 1973, Thomas bequeathed a substantial sum to the University to provide for an annual public lecture on the theme of 'Happiness – what it is and how it may be achieved by individuals as well as nations.'

to deliver a barrelful of laughs? Each Baggs event is special because of the diversity of those selected to deliver it and the Professor of Creative Writing at Royal Holloway, University of London, brings his exclusive stamp to this year's event.

In the flesh he is tall, slim, elegant and everything you might expect of an artist of his calibre: awkward, dreamy, deep, genuine – and intensely likeable. Asked whether he is a happy person, he replies: 'I am, these days, happy in life and in my work; probably as a result of meeting someone nice who irradiates something special but who, unhappily, is not very well at the moment.'

Back in the Great Hall we are urged to contemplate the authority of sadness, the transformative nature of pain – 'possibly a way to a kind of happiness itself' – and whether happiness equals transcendence over the world of misery.

'Do quick fixes make us happy?' he concludes. 'I wonder.'

Gallery Talk

Picture of the Month is Gwen John's 'Girl in Blue Dress' of 1914–15, which is currently featuring in the exhibition **Reunited: Gwen John, Mère Poussepin and the Catholic Church**, on display at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts until 21 September. You can read more about this picture on the Barber website at www.barber.org.uk.



Have you ever thought about learning Russian, or Portuguese, or Arabic?

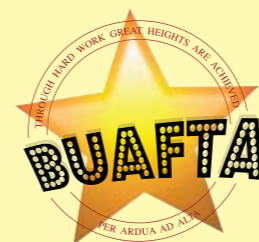
The Centre for Modern Languages offers Open Access evening language courses in **Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish** and **Turkish** from October 2008 to March 2009. Course generally take place in the evening (there are some daytime classes) and classes are for 2 hours a week.

Courses are open to students, members of staff and members of the public.

Cost: £56.00 students and over 60s
£87.00 staff and public

Enrol online at www.cml.bham.ac.uk
Deadline: 3 October 2008.

CML is at **R17** on the campus map.



Watch this space for updates – **BUAFTA** nominations open soon

Accommodation to let

Longbridge: Fully furnished double room in a quiet cul-de-sac, 5 minutes walk from station. Shared facilities with postgraduate. Staff/postgrad, £70/wk. 07724 381144.

Accommodation for sale

Harborne: Pretty 1930s detached house with large private garden and spectacular views over Chad Vale. Two miles from University. Three bedrooms, three reception rooms and two bathrooms, with planning permission to add three bedrooms and one bathroom. Vacant possession available. Offers based on £425,000. Viewing through Robert Powell & Co on 0121 454 6930

Bournbrook: Three-bed semi detached home. Owner scaling down after 35 years! In good state throughout. Well-maintained family home close University/QE Hospital. Kitchen, dining room, extended pleasant secluded garden. Off-road parking at front. £229,950ono. Tel: 0121 472 1766. Email jill.edgington@bigfoot.com.

Christchurch, Dorset: Fisherman's terraced cottage. Ten minutes' walk from Priory and Town Centre and within easy reach of the New Forest. Twenty minutes' walk to local beach. Would suit young professionals or ideal for holiday let. £230,000. Contact: A. Cooke. Tel: 07926 458612.

Holidays

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The University Dental & Implant Centre is open to all members of the public for a full range of dental services including routine care, cosmetic dentistry and dental implants. We are in the Health Centre on 5 Pritchatts Road. Visit www.universitydental.co.uk for full information or telephone reception on 0121 687 8882.

Sales

The Sock Man 22 August noon–2pm
Venue: Staff House.

New food shops

International Food has all your cooking essentials from countries around the world.
Open: Monday–Friday 9.30am–5pm, Wednesday 9.30am–6pm
Venue: University Centre

19 Gales Farmhouse Foods is a family run business specialising in luxury hand-made fruit and savoury pies. Award-winning produce which is made using natural ingredients either grown or sourced locally.
Open: Monday–Friday 10am–6pm
Venue: University Centre