

# Bulletin

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This Issue • £3m investment in University Spin-out company • Leicester academic cited in top 100 for research

## IT'S AN HONOUR



Four distinguished people were honoured at the postgraduate degree congregations at the University.

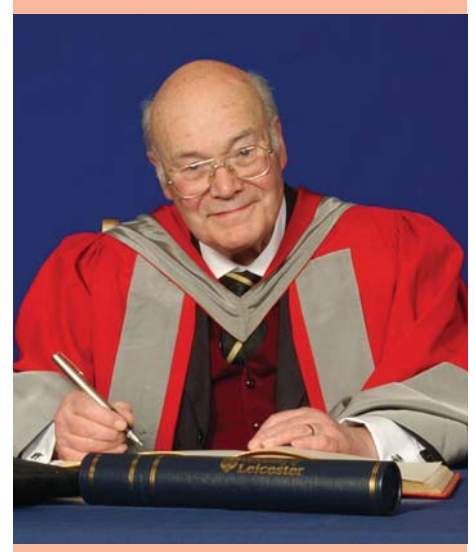
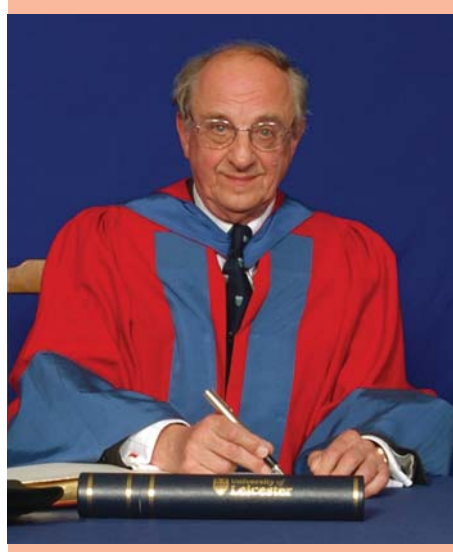
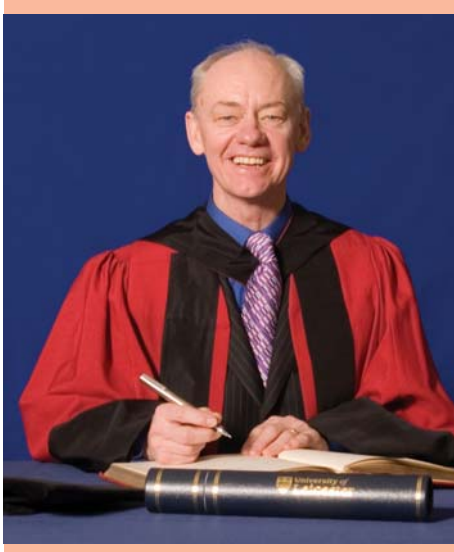
*Left:* Internationally renowned singer Engelbert Humperdinck processes after receiving an honorary degree of Doctor of Music.

*Below, l-r:* The Revd Alan Race, Rector of St Andrews, Aylestone, Leicester, interfaith worker and author of *Interfaith Encounter*, who is a significant contributor to the multi-faith community nationally and internationally. Doctor of Laws.

Professor Sir John Enderby, President of the Institute of Physics is a former Professor and Head of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Leicester. Doctor of Science.

Mr David Campton, noted playwright. Doctor of Letters.

see pages 6-7



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University of  
**Leicester**



## National Award for Botanic Garden Feature



▶ Three Fibonacci pavement designs incorporated into the herb garden at the University of Leicester's Harold Martin Botanic Garden in Oadby have won a national award.

The paving won a BALI (British Association of Landscape Industries) award. BALI received record entries for the 2005 National Landscape Awards. With 125 schemes submitted, this reflects the wealth and breadth of talent of BALI members - throughout the UK and Overseas.

Entries were received across all seventeen categories and from all corners of the UK, and beyond. The range extended from a small domestic garden in Southampton to the grounds of the Scottish Parliament Building in Edinburgh, to the Burjuman Shopping Centre in Dubai, highlighting the diversity of this exciting industry BALI represents.

The Fibonacci pavement designs at the University of Leicester botanic garden feature a shell, a hopscotch court and a pine cone. The Fibonacci sequence of numbers are named after a 12th-century Italian mathematician from Pisa, who discovered them while considering how rabbit populations might increase in number. The series is worked out by starting with 1 and 1, and adding the last two numbers together to make the next. The numbers translate into a spiral. ☺

## Quester leads £3.1million investment in University spin-out company, Haemostatix

▶ Quester, a leading UK venture capital company, announced that it has led a £3.1million investment in Haemostatix Ltd, a drug design and development company that is developing a safe alternative to platelet transfusion.

Quester will invest £2.4million in this latest funding round, which includes investments by the Catapult Venture Managers (on behalf of the East Midlands Regional Venture Capital Fund) and The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA). The investment will enable the company to finance the development of HaemoPlax(tm), which aims to overcome the current problems associated with platelet transfusion, through to preliminary clinical trials.

Transfusion of platelets prepared from blood donations is the only treatment for cancer or surgical patients who are deficient in platelets and who are therefore at risk of severe bleeding. However, platelets are expensive to produce,

have a shelf life of only five days, and need to be screened to remove the risk of transmission of blood-borne viruses that cause Hepatitis and HIV.

HaemoPlax(tm), which is designed to be a cost effective alternative to platelet transfusion, represents a new type of treatment that will be safer and easier to use than the current therapy, with significant saving in ancillary treatments costs.

Haemostatix, a spin out from the University of Leicester, was founded in 2003 by Sarah Middleton (CEO) and Professor Alison Goodall (CSO), in conjunction with the University of Leicester, which played a crucial supporting role in the company's early stages. At that time, Haemostatix received start-up funding of £250,000 from The Lachesis University Challenge Fund and initial investment from NESTA.

Dr Jonathan Gee, investment director at Quester, commented:

"HaemoPlax(tm) addresses an important need in a global market as

access to fresh donated platelets can be problematic. We hope that HaemoPlax(tm) will overcome a number of deficiencies with platelet transfusion and make the therapy more widely and easily available. Haemostatix also has follow-on products in the pipeline and this latest funding enables the company to advance to the next step in its development. This investment clearly demonstrates Quester's ability to support companies from start-up, through funds such as Lachesis, to the later stages of development, through our VCT and institutional funds."

Sarah Middleton, CEO of Haemostatix, added:

"There is a real clinical need for an alternative to blood derived platelets for transfusion, and we have reached a key stage in the development of the HaemoPlax(tm). Quester has worked with the company since 2002 and we are pleased to have their financial support and strategic input to take the business forward." ☺

## New Research 'Will Change Way Heart Attack Patients are Treated'

▶ A recently published study led from the University of Leicester and University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust reveals that angioplasty (where a balloon and stent is used to open up a blocked artery) can cut the risk of adverse outcome by half for patients suffering a heart attack where conventional clot-busting drugs have failed to open the vessel.

The British Heart Foundation-funded research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, will change the way heart attack patients are treated - making angioplasty to reopen a clogged

artery the standard of care if clot-busting drugs have failed.

Dr Tony Gershlick, of the Department of Cardiovascular Sciences, found through the study involving 35 UK centres, that angioplasty used in such a situation halves the risk of a stroke, heart failure or of a later heart attack.

The Leicester-led study finds that even though it may take longer to move a patient to a hospital to perform the angioplasty, the benefits outweigh any disadvantages.

Dr Gershlick said the results of the

study had changed clinical practice in the UK and would have an impact worldwide.

"Rescue angioplasty is the standard of care now in the UK," he said, before adding: "World-wide, clinicians now have an evidence-based therapy that will beneficially influence the outcome for the 40% or so of patients in whom the clot-busting drugs have failed. E-mails from colleagues around the world testify to the bench-mark nature of this study and how it will influence international practice." ☺



# ARCHAEOLOGISTS UNCOVER ONE OF BIGGEST MEDIEVAL GRAVEYARDS

► University of Leicester archaeologists are beginning work on examining the largest discovery of medieval skeletons - numbering 1,300 - to be found outside London. The burials are from the graveyard of the lost church of St Peter's, demolished in 1573 and recently rediscovered.

The skeletons were discovered by a team from University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) working at the site of a former swimming pool- St Margaret's Baths- which is being redeveloped as part of a £350m Shires shopping centre expansion.

Richard Buckley, Director of ULAS, said the discovery had

surpassed his expectations and would provide new insights into medieval life in Leicester.

"Until now we have relied on evidence from medieval rubbish - including food remains, pottery and other finds - to build up a picture of medieval life in the city. This group of burials represents the first opportunity to examine the medieval population itself, in terms of life expectancy, stature and health.

"Evidence of some communal burials and high infant mortality also indicate evidence of infection and disease.

"The skeletons are very well preserved - some were in coffins

and others weren't and were placed in shrouds. We were expecting there to be some 300 skeletons- but the scale of this discovery is stunning."

The site dates from between the 12th century and the mid 1500s and is part of the medieval church of St Peter's - one of two parish churches in the city which disappeared in the late medieval period.

Archaeologists also discovered the remains of the church together with evidence of a bell casting pit within the tower after digging some two and a half metres at the city centre location which will eventually be occupied by a John Lewis store. 📍

# Why Music Downloads have Lost the X Factor

► The accessibility of music has meant that it is taken for granted and does not require a deep emotional commitment once associated with music appreciation, say researchers from Leicester, Surrey and York.

It could account for the popularity of shows like the X factor where viewers can watch performers and engage with the programme - rather than simply download a track.

Music psychologists monitored 346 people over a two week period to evaluate how they related to music and came to the conclusion that people were now more passive than ever before in their consumption of music.

This compares to earlier times, for example the 19th century, when the only music you could hear was live music -leading it to be more highly valued and prized than today. The composer took pride of place as the generator of the music while the performer was the 'middle man' who conveyed the music to the audience.

But the development of the mass media in the twentieth century meant that music became much more widely and readily available, and so arguably lost its aura of automatic aesthetic value. It became viewed as a commodity that was produced, distributed and consumed just like any other.

The study was carried out by Dr Adrian North, of the School of Psychology, University of Leicester, Prof David Hargreaves, Centre for International Research on Creativity and Learning in Education, University of Roehampton, and Jon Hargreaves, now a graduate of the University of York. 📍

# PSYCHIATRY TEAM WINS TOP AWARD

► At a glittering ceremony at London's Hilton Hotel in November 2005 Dr Sabyasachi Bhaumik, Honorary Senior Lecturer in Psychiatry, and his team from the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust were presented with one of the top accolades in the country - the Janssen-Cilag sponsored Hospital Doctor Award for Psychiatry Team of the Year.

The prestigious Hospital Doctor awards celebrate the clinical excellence and innovation of outstanding consultants and their teams and aim to reward teams who achieve the highest standards - standards that Dr Bhaumik and the learning disability service team clearly demonstrated to the judges.

The judges said, "Dr Bhaumik's team demonstrate an extremely impressive and comprehensive array of high-quality service development and innovation. There has been a thorough assessment of the needs of the population".

The team includes psychiatrists, psychologists, physiotherapists, speech & language therapists,



*Dr Bhaumik led the Learning Disability Services to win the Psychiatry Team of the Year award.*

occupational therapists, community nurses and the outreach team.

Three key achievements that helped the team win the award were:

- the publication of the first national prescribing guidelines for people with learning disabilities;

- communications development work to meet the needs of the learning disability service client group; and
- the patient centred focus of the process leading to the closure of Gorse Hill Hospital.

-Source: Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust



*(l-r) Professor Will Steward, Head of Department of Cancer Studies and Molecular Medicine, University of Leicester, Professor Bob Burgess, Vice-Chancellor, Patricia Hewitt & Professor Ian Lauder, Dean of Medicine, University of Leicester*



► New facilities in Leicester to help cure more children of cancer were opened by the Right Honourable Patricia Hewitt MP, Secretary of State for Health and MP for Leicester West.

The extension to the current data centre of the United Kingdom Children's Cancer Study Group (UKCCSG) will facilitate more clinical trials to help improve survival for all children with cancer.


The UKCCSG, largely funded by Cancer Research UK and based at the University of Leicester, is a national professional body responsible for the organisation, treatment and management of virtually all children with tumours in the UK. The UKCCSG is acknowledged as one of the world's leading childhood cancer clinical trial groups and over the past five years there has been significant

progress and success in its trials, resulting in improvements in survival.

In 2005, 75 per cent of children with cancer were cured, compared

to less than 30 per cent in the 1960s. For some types of children's cancer, survival is even better at around 95 per cent.

This dramatic improvement in

survival is the result of international research collaboration and well-organised multi-disciplinary trials, led by the UKCCSG over the last three decades. 

# HEALTH SECRETARY OPENS NEW WING OF CHILDREN'S CANCER CENTRE

## Corporate Manslaughter - Advice on New Offence

► Professor and Dean of Law at the University of Leicester Professor Chris Clarkson has played a prominent role advising a Government committee on plans for a new offence of Corporate Manslaughter

A joint House of Commons sub-committee (Home Affairs and Work and Pensions), advised by Professor Clarkson, published a Report strongly backing the Government's proposals to introduce a new offence of Corporate Manslaughter.

Professor Chris Clarkson, Specialist Advisor to the Joint Sub-committee said:


"Under the present law it is extremely difficult to obtain manslaughter convictions against

companies whose gross negligence has resulted in the deaths of workers or members of the public.

"After many years of promising to introduce legislation, the Government earlier in the year published a draft Bill on the topic. The Joint Sub-committee considered over 150 written responses and heard oral evidence from 29 interested organisations and individuals.

"In its Report, published today, the Committee warmly endorses the proposal to introduce the new offences but also makes many suggestions aimed at improving the Bill. Most controversial of these is the proposal (not in the original Bill) that individual directors and managers


should also be capable of being liable for the offence and imprisonment. The Report also calls for a far wider range of possible penalties to be imposed on convicted companies.

"It is now over eight years since the Government first announced it was going to consider such legislation. Since then well over 2,000 people have been killed at work and numerous members of the public killed in various train crashes. Yet throughout this period only a handful of companies (all very small) and directors have been convicted of manslaughter. I really hope the Government accepts this Report and introduces a Bill before the end of this parliamentary session". 

## Launch of New Network

► An international conference at the University of Leicester Management Centre launched the new UK Efficiency and Productivity Analysis Network (UKEPAN).

Delegates from around the world at attend the event, which aims to promote research into efficiency and productivity analysis, particularly the use of mathematical programming and econometric methods in measuring performance in various forms of economic activity.

UKEPAN hopes to establish links between researchers in this field, develop new research initiatives and disseminate research results widely. 



# Lady Gretton Visits English Local History



► Lady Gretton, the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, visited the Centre for English Local History on 26 January to discuss with the staff of the Centre the feasibility of reviving the Victoria County History of Leicestershire. This multivolume work, providing an authoritative account of every village and town in the county, was being written in the former Department of English Local History in the 1950s, and volume 5 was published in 1964. The hope now is to complete the work with a number of new volumes.

*Professor Chris Dyer*

*Lady Gretton visits English Local History (From left to right) Professor Keith Snell, Professor Chris Dyer, Lady Gretton, Professor Harold Fox*

## BLACKBOARD MILESTONES

► At the end of 2005 the University reached some significant milestones in its implementation of e-learning

The University's Pro-Vice Chancellor for teaching and learning – Professor John Fothergill – welcomed these developments at an event to celebrate Leicester's 1,000th Blackboard module going online.

In welcoming the achievement of

this particular milestone, he expressed the University's gratitude to all those who had contributed to the rapid development of e-learning at Leicester since the introduction of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in May 2002. He noted that it was particularly appropriate that this 1,000th module course should be in Biological Sciences given the hard work they had put in to this

development. The other milestone reached is that over 14,000 Leicester students are now enrolled on courses supported by Blackboard. Once you add the Medical School's Tribal VLE, the total reaches over 80% of the University's students.

These sentiments were echoed by Gilly Salmon – the University's Professor of E-Learning & New

Technologies. Achieving such milestones meant that the University has an excellent basis for the exploration of using e-learning to meet the needs of academics and students alike. She emphasised the importance of the recent Beyond Distance Research Alliance conference in continuing this process.

## Awareness Under Anaesthesia

► It is the stuff of nightmares – you are under anaesthetic during an operation but you are fully conscious. Aware of every incision – yet unable to communicate that fact.

A leading Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Leicester revealed his views and findings on awareness in anaesthesia during his inaugural lecture.

Professor Michael Wang, of the School of Psychology gave the lecture, Dissecting Consciousness on the Operating Theatre Table.

Professor Wang said episodes of full awareness with explicit recall during operations with general anaesthesia are more common than many realise. He added:

"The common reason for failure to identify intra-operative awareness is the paralyzing effects

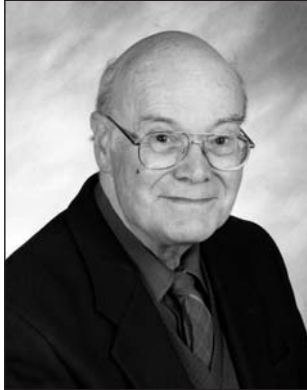
of muscle relaxants. Contrary to traditional belief there are no reliable clinical signs to enable the identification of wakefulness."

Studies conducted by Prof Wang and Dr Ian Russell (Hull Royal Infirmary) have made use of the isolated forearm technique to determine levels of consciousness during general anaesthesia, which allows communication despite the muscle paralysis.

The isolated forearm technique simply involves applying a tourniquet to the forearm just before the paralyzing drug is administered. This allows the patients to move his/her hand when asked to if he/she is sufficiently conscious to do so. The technique has been pioneered by Dr Russell and Prof Wang.



At the winter Degree Congregations the University awarded Honorary Degrees on the following individuals in recognition of their outstanding achievements in the creative arts, science, academia and public life.



**Mr David Campton**  
*(Degree of Doctor of Letters)*

David Campton was born in Leicester and educated at what was then the Wyggeston Boys' Grammar School (now Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth I College). He still lives in Leicester when not engaged in work elsewhere. Fifty years ago he gave up a safe job with the East Midlands Gas Board in order to write for a living. Occasional diversions into acting and directing involved him most notably in the early days of the Scarborough Theatre in the Round, as well as other theatres, including the Phoenix Theatre in Leicester.

In 1958 he received an Arts Council Bursary for playwriting and he has continued to write ever since. More than a hundred one-act and twenty full-length stage plays by him have now been produced, a group of which have settled into the repertoire of the amateur theatre, regularly performed in schools and festivals. Some of his shorter pieces have had West End productions and many have been produced overseas, but for the most part he has written for, and been performed in, what has been called 'the other theatre', for example *Jonah*, which was commissioned for, and first presented in, Chelmsford Cathedral. David Campton's adaptation of *Frankenstein* was produced in the Leicester Haymarket Theatre's main auditorium, and two other plays: *Dark Wings* and *The Life and Death of Almost Everybody* were presented in the Haymarket Studio.



**Professor Sir John Enderby, CBE, FRS**  
*(Degree of Doctor of Science)*

Professor Sir John Enderby held the H H Wills Chair of Physics at the University of Bristol from 1981-1996 and is now Emeritus Professor and Senior Research Fellow there. He is also Chairman of Melys Diagnostics Ltd, an SME based in Wales.

After a period at the University of Sheffield at the beginning of his academic career, he was Professor in Physics and Head of the Department at the University of Leicester until 1976, when he took up an appointment as Professor of Physics at Bristol University. He subsequently became Head of Department and Director of the H H Wills Physics Laboratory. He was also Directeur-Adjoint at the Institut Laue-Langevin in Grenoble between 1985 and 1988, and Fellow of the Argonne National Laboratory, Illinois, between 1989 and 1991, and he has held a number of other distinguished visiting fellowships and professorships. In 1997 he was appointed Humphrey Davy Lecturer at the Royal Society.

Sir John has served as a member of numerous professional organisations, including the Physics Committee and the Neutron Beam Research Committee at the Science Research Council (SRC) (where he was twice Chairman), and the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (PPARC). He was Chairman of the Physics Panel for the 2001 HEFCE Research Assessment Exercise, and of the Liquids Board of the European Physical Society.

Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1985, he became the Society's Vice-President and Physical Secretary until he retired in 2005. He is currently President of the Institute of Physics. Among his numerous honours are the Institute's Guthrie medal and prize, his appointment by the University of Chicago as a Distinguished Fellow of the Argonne National Laboratory, his membership of the Academia Europea, and his foreign membership of the Royal Holland Academy of Science and Humanities. He is widely published in the field of the structure and properties of liquids.



## Mr Engelbert Humperdinck (*Degree of Doctor of Music*)

Mr Engelbert Humperdinck has an international reputation as a singer after almost forty years in the music industry. His single *Release Me* sold 80,000 copies a day and was in the record charts for 56 weeks. He has sold 130 million records and has seventy Gold and twenty three Platinum Albums to his name. Around 250 branches or chapters of fan clubs are set up in his honour worldwide. He has his own star in the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He has recently published an autobiography entitled *What's in a Name*.

Born Arnold George Dorsey in Madras, India, where his father was in the British army, he was one of ten children. His mother was a singer and violinist. When he was ten, his family moved to Leicester, where he was brought up. At the age of 11 he began to study the saxophone, until at the age of seventeen he discovered his singing voice in a club contest. He took the name of the 19th century composer of *Hansel and Gretel* in 1965, at the suggestion of his manager. Two years later, his chance for wider fame came when he was offered a substitute slot on *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*. He quickly became well-known in America as well as in the UK, and Elvis Presley became a close friend.

He works tirelessly for many charities, from Leicester to Los Angeles, and has given his support to the recent Leicester Medical Research Foundation (Medisearch) appeal for funds to support research into tuberculosis. He is patron of the County Air Ambulance.



## The Revd Alan Race (*Degree of Doctor of Laws*)

The Revd Alan Race has been Rector of Aylestone Parish Church since 1994. His career has always been at the interface between theological education in university and church settings, as well as in pastoral ministry. In 1983 his book *Christians and Religious Pluralism* framed the discussion of Christian responses to religious plurality for the next twenty years. In 2001, he published a book entitled *Interfaith Encounter: the Twin Tracks of Theology and Dialogue*, confirming his position as an international expert on the Christian interpretation of religious plurality.

He has been speaker at international colloquia and conferences, including the World Council of Churches, the Parliament of the World's Religions and the World Congress of Faiths, for which he edits the journal *Interreligious Insight*. He is the longest-standing member of the Church of England's national body responding to multifaith issues, and is a prominent member of the Leicester Council of Faiths, playing a leading role in helping faith communities work together in the city.



## Challenging Orthodoxy

► Over the last two years the University of Leicester Management Centre has been going through a period of unprecedented expansion, investing £1M per year in salaries and attracting more than 20 new academics, all internationally respected for the quality of their research and teaching.

On 10 January the Centre celebrated this expansion with the first of two full days of Inaugural Lectures in Management. The second day will take place on 4 May.

The Leicester Management Centre prides itself on being different from traditional business schools, as a national centre with a reputation for critical management. Research-led and theoretically informed, the Centre specialises in research on highly contemporary issues, while nurturing a respect for historical understanding of management.

International students from 80 countries study with the Centre, either on campus or through distance learning, and the Centre fosters respect for the understanding of other cultures, developing a feel for the way different civilisations may look at management issues.

Central to its teaching is a suspicion of easy answers, panaceas and quick-fix solutions and acceptance of the importance of giving the space and time to extend their thought beyond accepted boundaries, to speak out and to question their own beliefs.

Five of the Centre's new professors spoke on 10 January, all of whom are internationally acclaimed for their research and expertise. They took the theme of Challenging Orthodoxy, as it applies to their own research fields. ☺

# Frank May Prize Lecture



**Back row (l-r): Professor Ian Lauder, Dean of Medicine; Dr Frank May; Professor Robert Burgess, Vice-Chancellor; Front (l-r): Mrs Katherine May; Dr Andrew Fry and his wife, Dr. Sue Shackleton, also an academic in the Biochemistry Department.**

► New insights on the causes of many human diseases including cancer were presented at a prestigious prize lecture delivered at the University on 30 January.

Dr Andrew Fry, a Lister Institute Research Fellow and Reader in Biochemistry, delivered The Frank

May Prize Lecture in the Frank and Katherine May Lecture Theatre in the Henry Wellcome Building.

The lecture, Journey to the centre of the cell: New insights on human disease, presented a layman's overview of the research work that has been going on in Dr Fry's laboratory

within the Department of Biochemistry over the past five years.

"I highlighted how our research has contributed to the understanding of a key aspect of human cell biology that is providing important new insights on the causes of many human diseases including cancer," said Dr Fry. ☺



## New Professor of Theoretical Astrophysics

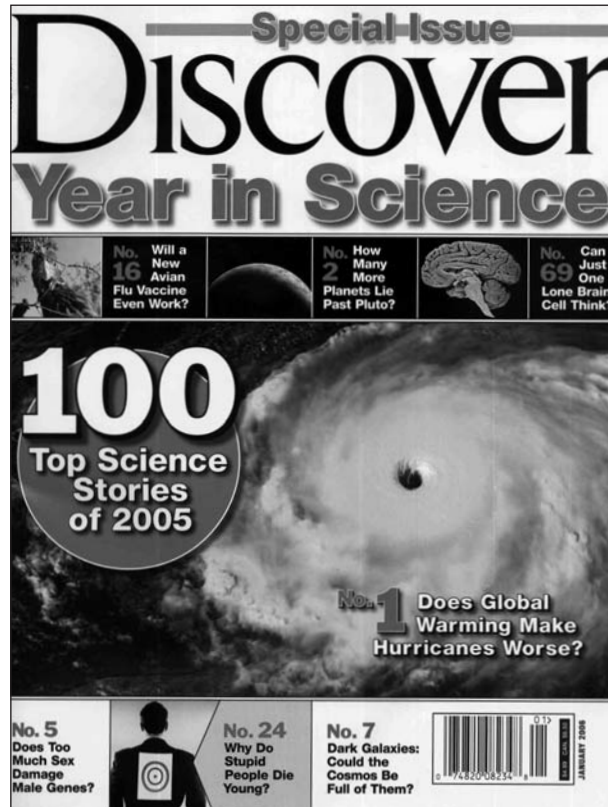
► The University has appointed a new Professor of Theoretical Astrophysics in its Department of Physics and Astronomy. Professor Walter Dehnen (pictured) gained his PhD from Heidelberg University in 1994 with a thesis on dynamical models for elliptical galaxies. He was a PostDoc at Oxford University (1994-1999), Max-Planck Institute for Astronomy, Heidelberg, (1999-2002), and the Astrophysical

Institute Potsdam (Germany), before joining the University of Leicester as a lecturer in 2003.

Apart from teaching undergraduate Physics, he will concentrate on his research on the dynamics of galaxies, employing the departments computer cluster, supervising PhD students and postdocs, and collaborating with other members of the Theoretical Astrophysics group. ☺



*Dr Quiroga's research was cited on the front cover of the magazine.*



► A University of Leicester scientist is celebrating after hearing that his work has been cited as one of the top in the world for 2005.

Dr Rodrigo Quian Quiroga's work, with international colleagues, was selected as one of the top 100 science stories of 2005 by Discover magazine.

The Leicester bioengineer carried out a study that appeared in the science journal Nature. The paper revealed the discovery that individual cells in the brain respond to specific images.

The findings confirm a decades-old but dismissed theory that link individual neurons to individual concepts. Dr Quiroga, of the Department of Engineering, carried out his studies at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), where he is a visiting associate in biology and UCLA, where he is a visiting researcher at the department of Neurosurgery. His main research interest is in Neuroscience and the analysis of electrophysiological data. The research involves the study of how visual perception interacts with the neural network of the brain.

The study generated worldwide media interest after the scientists discovered that individual cells could respond to a specific image eg that of a film star. The team found a woman who had a neuron for pictures of Halle Berry, including a drawing of her face and an image of just the words of her name. The same applied to other stars like Jennifer Aniston.

In scientific terms the study is important for examining the possibility of surgical treatment for patients with epilepsy and also in

# 'Jennifer Aniston Cell' Study Wins Top 100 Citation

terms of gaining understanding of how memory is created.

Dr Quiroga said:

"It was very nice to hear that our discovery of 'intelligent' neurons that represent abstract concepts has been selected as one of the 100 top science stories of 2005. This finding was the fruit of about 3 years of very hard work, so it is great to be in a list of top scientific topics with so many good stories in other areas.

"We were also very happy to see the large repercussion of our work within our colleagues and in the media, including a recent article in Scientific American. Our results ended up being interesting to many colleagues because they go

against what was previously thought. Indeed, very few people would have predicted we would find these types of neurons.

"I think our results are a good step forward in our understanding of how perceptions and memories are represented in the brain. But we are just scratching the surface. There are so many things we still have to understand and we are currently running several follow up projects to do this. How our brain manages to perceive things, to store and recall memories, to create associations and think is something that has puzzled me for some time. I hope to be busy dealing with these questions in the next few years."

## Break-through in Brain Injury Study

► A breakthrough by scientists at the University of Leicester in understanding mechanisms within the brain which cause injury could lead to better treatments in the future for conditions such as cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis.

Drs Robert Fern and Mike Salter of the Department of Cell Physiology and Pharmacology at the University had their findings published in the science journal Nature.

Their study is particularly important as it identifies the cause of damage to the brain and the mechanism by which this occurs - thereby raising the possibility of drugs being developed in the future which may help to reduce injury and the disease states that follow.

Dr Fern said: "This project has taken over a year to complete and has produced some rather important findings. We believe that we may have opened a new window into how the brain becomes damaged in a number of important diseases ranging from stroke to multiple sclerosis and spinal cord injury. We will now continue to study the particular brain receptor that is involved in the hope of discovering a way to block the receptor and therefore avert brain injury for a large number of patients."

This work was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Neurological Disorders and Stroke to R.F. 16



# CHEMISTRY PROJECT NETS £250,000 EXTRA



► The Chemistry: The Next Generation (C:TNG) project is set to run for an extra year, throughout 2007, thanks to a successful bid for around £250,000 of continuation funding.

C:TNG is promoting the excitement of chemical sciences as a subject to school students that are under-represented in higher education. The University of Leicester is the lead HEI for this project that is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

C:TNG is running in three pilot regions (East Midlands, London & the North West), involving 12 university chemistry departments, industrial partners and sector skills councils. Over the past year, it has run a range of events - including hands-on activities and careers fairs - and reached over 8,000 students. ☺

## Ancient lakes of the Sahara

► The Sahara has not always been the arid, inhospitable place that it is today - it was once a savannah teeming with life, according to researchers at the Universities of Reading and Leicester.

Eight years of studies in the Libyan desert area of Fazzan, now one of the harshest, most inaccessible spots on Earth, have revealed swings in its climate that have caused considerably wetter

periods, lasting for thousands of years, when the desert turned to savannah and lakes provided water for people and animals.

This, in turn, has given us vital clues about the history of humans in the area and how these ancient inhabitants coped with climate change as the land began to dry up around them again.

In their article 'Ancient lakes of the Sahara', which appears in the

January-February issue of *American Scientist* magazine, Dr Kevin White of the University of Reading and Professor David Mattingly of the University of Leicester explain how they used satellite technology and archaeological evidence to reveal new clues about both the past environment of the Sahara and of human prehistory in the area. ☺

## A Question of Taste?

► The food on your table speaks volumes about you - and not just about your taste according to a new study at the University into the archaeology of food.

The School of Archaeology & Ancient History at the University of Leicester is one of the main centres in Britain and Europe for the study of ancient food.

Professor Marijke van der Veen revealed in her inaugural lecture that ancient foods were used to denote social status and marked the origins of our stratified society.

Food was also used as a way of forming distinct cultural identity - as opposed to just being a question of preference - according to her lecture: *The Archaeology of Food - the diversification of our foodways.*

And her research has also found that there literally is no such thing as a free lunch - food was used to recruit labourers who were allowed to feast to their fill in recompense for their work.

Professor Van der Veen presented the results of three projects. The theme running through these case studies is the growing diversification of our foodways and how this is linked to social complexity and geopolitics. ☺

## Annual Industry Lecture

► The Design & Build of the World's Largest Passenger Aircraft - the Airbus A380 - was the subject of the 8th Annual Industry Lecture given in the Department of Engineering

Rob Bray, A380 Wing Product Engineering Leader, Airbus UK, delivered the excellent lecture which was enjoyed by staff and students alike.

The A380 is destined to be the flagship of the Airbus product line

and will be the largest and most technologically advanced subsonic passenger aircraft when it enters service in 2006.

The origins of the aircraft and the rationale for the aircraft configuration were explained through an analysis of the market conditions and requirements. It was shown that in order to meet the ambitious, airline driven performance characteristics,

advanced technology and design is required. In addition to the challenges of the aircraft itself, the physical size of the aircraft and its constituent components led to new assembly and transportation challenges which were illustrated. Finally the current status of the project was discussed including orders achieved to date, flight test progress and the route to Entry Into Service.



# International Prize for Young Leicester Academic

► A University academic has scooped a prestigious international prize for her research into women scientists in the 18th and 19th centuries.


Dr Claire Brock, in the University's Department of English, was awarded the Singer Prize by the British Society for the History of Science. The award is made every two years to a young scholar, for an unpublished essay related to the history of science, technology or medicine and based on original research.

The prizewinning work, "The Public Worth of Mary Somerville", was commended by the panel of

judges for its "mastery of a range of sources, originality and clarity" and is to be published in March 2006 in the *British Journal for the History of Science*, published by Cambridge University Press.

Commenting on her success, Dr Brock said: 'I am delighted to be the recipient of this prestigious award, especially as previous winners include some of the icons in the field. Researching Mary Somerville is both a joy and a challenge and to win the Singer Prize with an article on this complex figure has meant a great deal'.


Dr Brock's research interests

include the place of the early female scientist in the history of science; women's non-fiction writing of the 18th and 19th centuries, the cultural history of fame and publicity in Britain and France; and the reception of Russian literature and culture in Europe 1760-1860. Among her forthcoming publications is *The Comet Sweeper: Caroline Herschel's Astronomical Ambition* (Icon, 2006). She is currently writing a book entitled *Public Experiments*, about female practitioners in the physical sciences, from Caroline Herschel to Mary Somerville. 

## Leicester secures funding for extra students

► The East Midlands has been allocated 1,398 additional student places at universities and colleges by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), to help meet identified regional and national strategic needs.

The allocation is part of an additional 30,000 student places financed by HEFCE. The 1,398 places will allow for growth and help protect and develop subjects which are strategically important to the nation, but potentially vulnerable because of a mismatch between supply and demand. These subjects include science, technology, engineering, mathematics, modern languages and land-based studies. Some subjects are also strategically important to a particular region.

The University of Leicester has secured funding for an extra 63 students taking science degrees. 

### 1. Food For Thought

Between 9th – 13th January 2006, 250 pupils from five Leicester city schools attended an activity day at the Botanic Garden discovering how crops are grown, processed and prepared for market. They also looked at life in Masaya, Nicaragua, a town twinned with Leicester. Taking on the roles of maize farmers, millers, cooks, herbalists and artisans, and assisted by University staff, student ambassadors, and volunteers from LMLG, they planted and harvested maize, ground the corn into flour and prepared tortillas and popcorn. Juice makers prepared fruit drinks while herbalists collected herbs and made healing balms. In the craft area artisans decorated cotton bags to keep tortillas warm and others designed necklaces and bracelets using seeds and wooden beads.

### 2. Shires Bones

University of Leicester archaeologists are beginning work on examining the largest discovery

of medieval skeletons - numbering 1,300 - to be found outside London. The burials are from the graveyard of the lost church of St Peter's, demolished in 1573 and recently rediscovered.

### 3. Gondar

Leicester's Professor Michael Silverman (right) participates in a joint ward round at the hospital in Gondar. The University of Leicester has played a prominent role in establishing higher education links with the University of Gondar in Ethiopia. Earlier this year, a delegation from Gondar visited Leicester and spent time shadowing Vice-Chancellor Professor Robert Burgess and other members of the University's management team. Professor Mike Silverman from the University is Director of the Leicester-Gondar Link Programme.

### 4. Villiers Hall Redevelopment

The £19M investment to develop new residences and conference facilities at the University of Leicester will help create some of

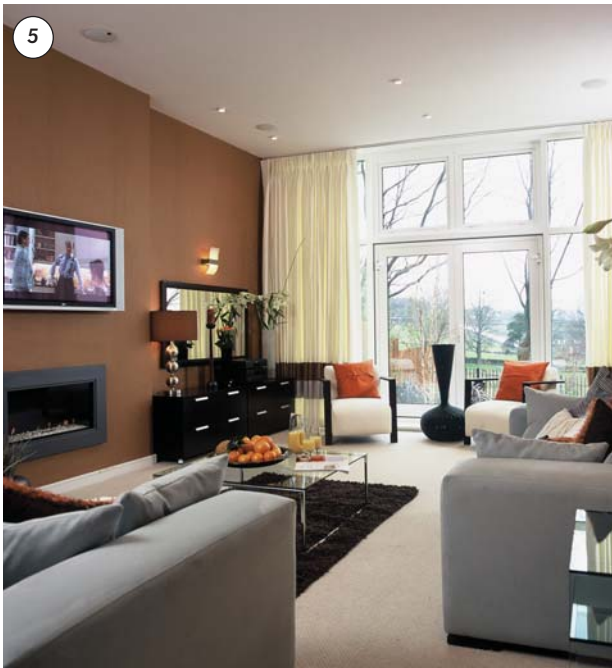
the best student and conference accommodation in the country. A total of the 581 en suite bedrooms will be available at the redevelopments in Oadby, in addition organisers will be able to choose from meeting rooms within the New Hall or from the extensive range of meeting rooms available across the site. The investment in accommodation at Leicester is part of a £300m Development Plan at the University of Leicester - one of the biggest programmes at any university in the UK.

### 5. Harmonious Homes

Together, but apart. Space seems to be the key ingredient for harmony in the home according to the findings of Project:LIFE, a major research project undertaken by house builder, David Wilson Homes, in conjunction with the Management Centre at the University of Leicester. The project also revealed the territorial hierarchy of the bathroom and why some teenagers prefer to do homework on the sofa. (pic credit: David Wilson Homes)

### 6. Mountain Medicine

A Consultant in the University of Leicester Medical School and at the Leicester Royal Infirmary has been instrumental in establishing at the University the UK's first, and to date only, English Language UIAA (Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme) approved course in mountain medicine. The course can be studied to Masters level. Peter Barry, who is a Consultant in Paediatric Intensive Care and Honorary Senior Lecturer, has helped set up the Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate in Mountain Medicine as a qualification for doctors who want to use their medical skills in a mountain environment, as well as more generally for the benefit of people taking part in all aspects of mountaineering.



**Captions for photostop on page 11**

## Bulletin

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