

# PROM



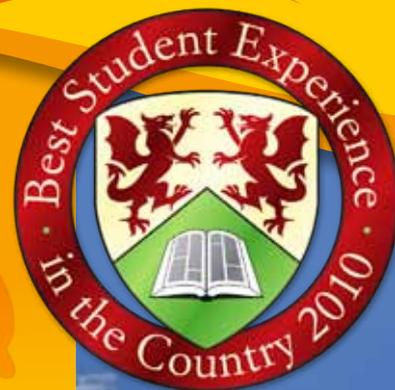
**Tomorrow's  
World**

**Changing  
Tradition**

**Aber in  
Westminster**

**Greenland's  
Sleeping Giants**

**A Constable's  
Landscape**



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PROM is the magazine of Aberystwyth University. Mae PROM ar gael yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg. Os nad yw'r copi hwn yn eich dewis iaith, cysylltwch ag [alumni@aber.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@aber.ac.uk) neu 01970 621568 ac fe anfonwn gopi arall atoch.

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## PROM 19

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**Published by:** Prifysgol Aberystwyth University  
**Designed by:** The Design Studio, Aberystwyth University  
**Printed by:** McLays, Cardiff

# Challenges and Opportunities

I am pleased to introduce the latest edition of PROM. I am sure that you will find it interesting, and I hope that you will find its new approach attractive.

I want to thank all who have been involved in producing it, and especially the staff of the Development and Alumni Relations office. The office is now firmly established, and will be an important link between the University and its former students.

When I was appointed Vice-Chancellor I remember saying that Higher Education was experiencing a period of accelerating change. Over the last few years that acceleration has itself been increasing. It is the characteristic of living organisations that they continually evolve – standing still is not an option. Thus Aberystwyth University is adapting and changing, building on its proud tradition. There will be challenges, but there will also be opportunities, and we will take advantage of those.

Aberystwyth, like all universities, operates on several platforms. We clearly have an important role in our immediate neighbourhood, and one of the particular features of Aberystwyth is the excellent relationship between university and the local community. The University has a particularly important role to fulfil the requirements of Wales and to contribute to its economic, social and cultural development - all equally important aspects.

But Higher Education is also a truly international activity, and Aberystwyth is part of a world wide community. In order to contribute fully to the life of their regions, universities have to be internationally competitive. It is not a choice – we must operate effectively and creatively in each of these environments.

In particular, it is important that Aberystwyth University contributes to the Higher Education system in Wales and across the UK. In this context, the last two years have been interesting ones for me personally, having been chair of Higher Education Wales and through working closely with colleagues in Universities UK as one of its Vice Presidents. A university education is valuable and it is also a privilege. It creates opportunities and extends horizons. One of the core roles of Higher Education is to develop a creative and self-aware society – to produce an environment to support individuals to achieve the highest attainable levels of personal intellectual fulfilment and achieve their potential.

Aberystwyth University has developed well over the last few years. We are especially pleased with our continuing success in the National Student Survey and other assessments of student satisfaction.

We were also delighted with our progress in the nationally published league tables. Imperfect measures as they are, it is still gratifying to see a rapid ascent in all of them. The competitiveness of our academic provision – for prospective students and employers – is one of the factors that has led to our outstanding success in attracting record numbers of applications and the conversion of that interest into firm acceptances; this summer we did not enter the ‘clearing’ system at all.

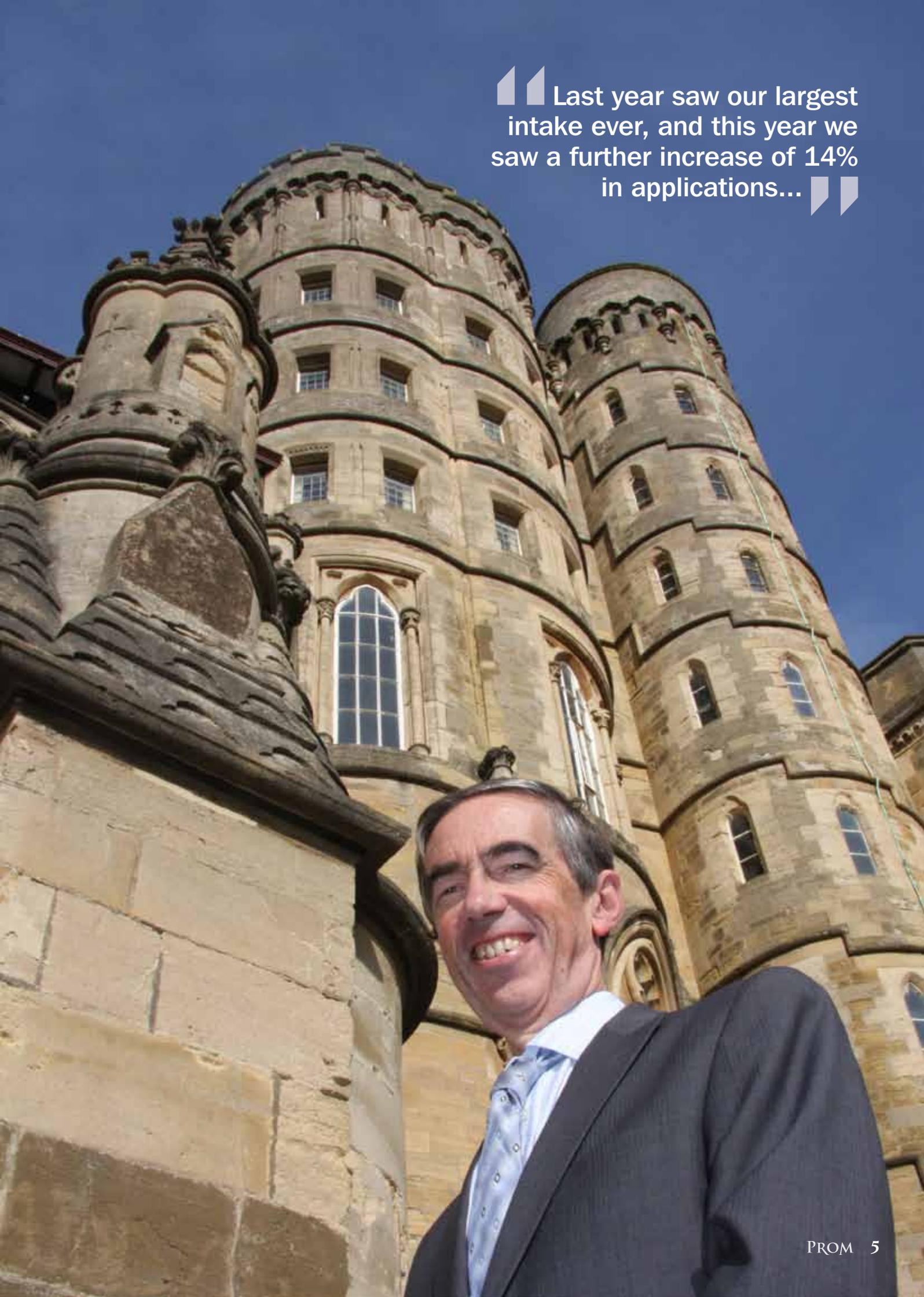
The University has continued to emphasise the importance of research, and acknowledges the continuum from pure research through applied research to innovation. Research and enterprise should not be disconnected, and it is a pleasure to note such success in so many of our departments. In research, as indeed in everything that we do, quality is paramount.

The research work which we do is increasingly multidisciplinary – so many important developments occur at the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines. Our work should be problem driven, and a thematic approach is increasingly appropriate: in future I envisage such a focused approach to postgraduate training and research, and we are likely to see the advantages of a multidisciplinary, problem driven and collaborative response.

As some of you will know, I have confirmed that I shall retire at the end of my term of office as Vice-Chancellor at the end of this academic year. The next few years will be a period of intense challenge for universities. But those challenges will bring opportunities, and Aberystwyth is in a good position to maintain its contribution and enhance its reputation - in Wales, in the UK and internationally.



**Professor Noel Lloyd CBE**

A man in a dark suit, light blue shirt, and light blue tie is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is standing in front of a large, multi-story stone building with several prominent towers. The towers have rounded tops and many windows. The sky is clear and blue. The man is positioned in the lower right foreground, with the building's facade and towers filling the background.

“ Last year saw our largest intake ever, and this year we saw a further increase of 14% in applications... ”

# “Probably the best place in the world to be a student”

**Aberystwyth University has, for the sixth consecutive year, excelled in terms of student satisfaction.**

The 2010 results of the National Student Survey (NSS) awarded the University a score of 4.4 (on a scale of 1-5), the third highest score for any public residential university in the UK. It also placed Aberystwyth fifth of all universities in the UK and top in Wales for the sixth year running for student satisfaction.

The results further support recent university league tables which saw Aberystwyth this year moving up 22 places in the *Guardian University*

*Guide*, six places in the *Times Higher Education Good University Guide* and seven places in the Independent's league table for student satisfaction. Aberystwyth has also been voted 'probably the best place in the world to be a student' in the International Student Barometer for the second year running.

Overall satisfaction at Aberystwyth remains very high at 92% - an increase of 2% on 2009 and 10% higher than both the Welsh and the UK average

Overall satisfaction at Aberystwyth remains very high at 92% - an increase

of 2% on 2009 and 10% higher than both the Welsh and the UK average.

Commenting on the University's success, Professor Martin Jones, Pro Vice-Chancellor, said, "This is a brilliant result. We are able to demonstrate improvements year on year which are reflected by these surveys and the satisfaction of our students. In short, we have all worked hard to develop the Aberystwyth 'student experience' brand and I would like to thank students, academic and support staff, and the Guild for creating this unique teaching and learning environment."

The NSS was conducted by Ipsos MORI. Data is available on the Unistats website ([www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)).

## Queen's Anniversary Prize

Aberystwyth University has been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education, in acknowledgment of the work of scientists at the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS).

They have successfully combined research on plant genetics with plant breeding techniques to develop commercially viable plant varieties that go some way towards meeting the challenges of food supply, water and energy security, and environmental sustainability.

The Award also recognises the way in which postgraduate teaching and research at IBERS is helping to produce the next generation of plant breeders.

Professor Wayne Powell, Director of IBERS, said, "I am delighted to receive this most prestigious Award on behalf of all the scientists and staff at IBERS. It recognises the commitment and dedication of high calibre visionaries working in plant breeding at Aberystwyth over the last



Professor Noel Lloyd and Professor Wayne Powell receive the award from the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

twenty years, who in turn have built on work that extends over the 90 years since the Welsh Plant Breeding Station was established by the University in 1919."

The Queen's Anniversary Prizes for Higher and Further Education are awarded every two years to institutions of higher and further education across the UK. They celebrate world-class achievement and capture the remarkable diversity and quality of the work going on in our universities and colleges of further education.



THE QUEEN'S  
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FOR HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION

2010

# Time honoured robot

The last edition of PROM featured a project undertaken in the Department of Computer Science involving a robot scientist called Adam. The discovery without human intervention of relatively simple but new scientific knowledge by Adam about the genomics of the baker's yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, an organism used by scientists to model more complex life systems, was published in the journal *Science* in April 2009.

Adam's work has now gained worldwide acclaim as *Time Magazine* has rated it the fourth most significant scientific discovery of 2009, ahead of the discovery of water on the moon and the progress at the Large Hadron Collider, in its list of the ten most

significant scientific discoveries of 2009.

*Time* said of Adam: "By any standard, it was an elementary discovery — the identification of the role of about a dozen genes in a yeast cell. But what made this finding a major breakthrough was the unlikely form of the scientist: a robot.

"In April, Adam became the first robotic system to make a novel scientific discovery with virtually no human intellectual input. Robots have long been used in experiments but Adam was the first to complete the cycle from hypothesis to experiment to reformulated hypothesis without human intervention."



# Aber alumna is The One

**Aberystwyth Theatre, Film and Television graduate Alex Jones has landed one of television's most lucrative roles as the new presenter of the prime time programme *The One Show*, on BBC1.**

Alex is a well-known face on Welsh language TV where she has presented series on travel, extreme sports and fashion. She also co-hosted the 2010 Six Nations Championship and is a regular on Real Radio.

Dr Anwen Jones of the Theatre, Film and Television Department said, "Alex has always been focused and dedicated to establishing her career. From early on as an undergraduate, she was very clear about her aims and ambitions.

"I remember Alex as an enthusiastic individual with an unusually mature mindset that motivated her to engage with all aspects of her studies in drama. She recognised the fact that an effective and successful television presenter needed to know and experience the industry from as wide and varied a perspective as possible."

Upon taking up the post, Alex said, "I'm absolutely thrilled to



Alex Jones

bits to be joining *The One Show*. I watch it at home every night on my sofa and can't believe that I'm now swapping it for *The One Show* sofa! It is the break I have only ever dreamed of."

*The One Show* is a hugely successful programme which regularly attracts more than five million viewers. Alex hosts the show with Jason Manford from Monday to Thursday.

Image ©BBC

# Graduation 2010

The 2010 Graduation Ceremonies marked an important milestone for Aberystwyth as the first cohort of students received Aberystwyth University degrees

In 2007 the University was granted a new Charter and Statutes by the Privy Council which included the powers to award its own degrees. Three years on, Aberystwyth graduands attended degree ceremonies at the Great Hall in the new Aberystwyth University gowns.

Reflecting the University's colours, the Bachelor's gown, worn by BA and BSc graduates alike, features red and green silk cord and red button detail on the sleeve and a black hood lined in green with a red border.

Professor Noel Lloyd, Vice-Chancellor of the University, said, "I am delighted that the Aberystwyth University degrees will be awarded for the first time. The University has seen notable successes in the last few years, and this is another indication of its confidence in the future."

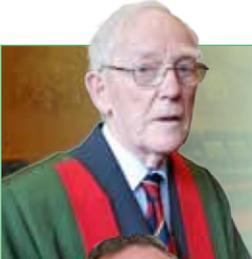
About 1,750 students graduated from Aberystwyth University this year.



The Vice-Chancellor with Lauren Hunt (BA English Literature), the first student to wear the Aberystwyth University gown

# Honorary Fellows

At graduation, seven Honorary Fellows were welcomed to the University



Six days after celebrating his ninetieth birthday, the historian **Emeritus Professor Ieuan Gwynedd Jones** became a Fellow of the University. As holder of the Sir John Williams Chair of Welsh History at Aber, Professor Jones built a powerful team of scholars and a profoundly influential postgraduate school.



**Mr Richard Morgan** has made an outstanding contribution to the University in his role as Treasurer. He has also contributed substantially to a range of aspects of Welsh life as Executive Secretary of the James Pantyfedwen Foundation.



**Mr Cynog Dafis'** contribution to Welsh life, and west Wales in particular, was honoured. An influential teacher of English at schools and colleges to generations of pupils, Mr Dafis then moved into politics and was MP and AM for Ceredigion between 1992 and 2003. He is widely regarded as one of Wales' primary political thinkers.



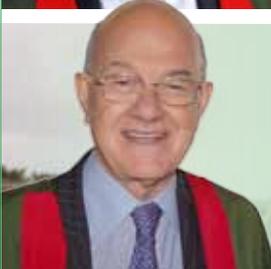
**Professor Steve Smith** is a passionate supporter of Norwich City Football Club, but the honour was given for his contribution to Higher Education as Professor of International Politics at Aberystwyth and currently as Vice Chancellor at Exeter University and President of Universities UK, the representative body for heads of UK universities.



**Mrs Rachel Lomax** spent twenty-six years at the Treasury before becoming a vice-president of the World Bank in 1995/96. In 2003, she became the first woman deputy governor of the Bank of England and in 2008 only the third woman to be a member of the board at HSBC. As Permanent Secretary at the Welsh Office she oversaw the transition to the National Assembly of Wales.



**Professor Terry Lyons** is Wallis Professor of Mathematics at Oxford University and Director of the Wales Institute of Mathematical and Computational Sciences. He is also one of the country's leading mathematical analysts and has received a range of prizes and honours reflecting his standing in the mathematics community.



**Lord Chief Justice Igor Judge** is the aptly named Chief Justice of England and Wales. Lord Judge has longstanding ties with Wales and has a mat on his desk in the Royal Courts of Justice in London which reads "I'd rather be in Abersoch". It is also appropriate that Aberystwyth, with its long tradition and reputation for the teaching of law, should honour the Lord Chief Justice of Wales.

# Divided by a song

Great tits in cities respond more strongly to songs of fellow city dwellers than to their country cousins, and rural birds are just as discriminating.

A UK survey of the great tit by Dr Rupert Marshall from IBERS has shown that the average minimum pitch of their songs is higher in noisy urban areas than in quieter, rural locations just a few kilometres away.

Male great tits sing songs to defend their territory and attract a mate. In urban environments songs can be masked by man-made noise. But while urban birds seem to have responded by raising their pitch to be heard, their new improved song seems not to impress their rural brethren, and singing at the wrong pitch may cause problems when they try to set up home somewhere new.

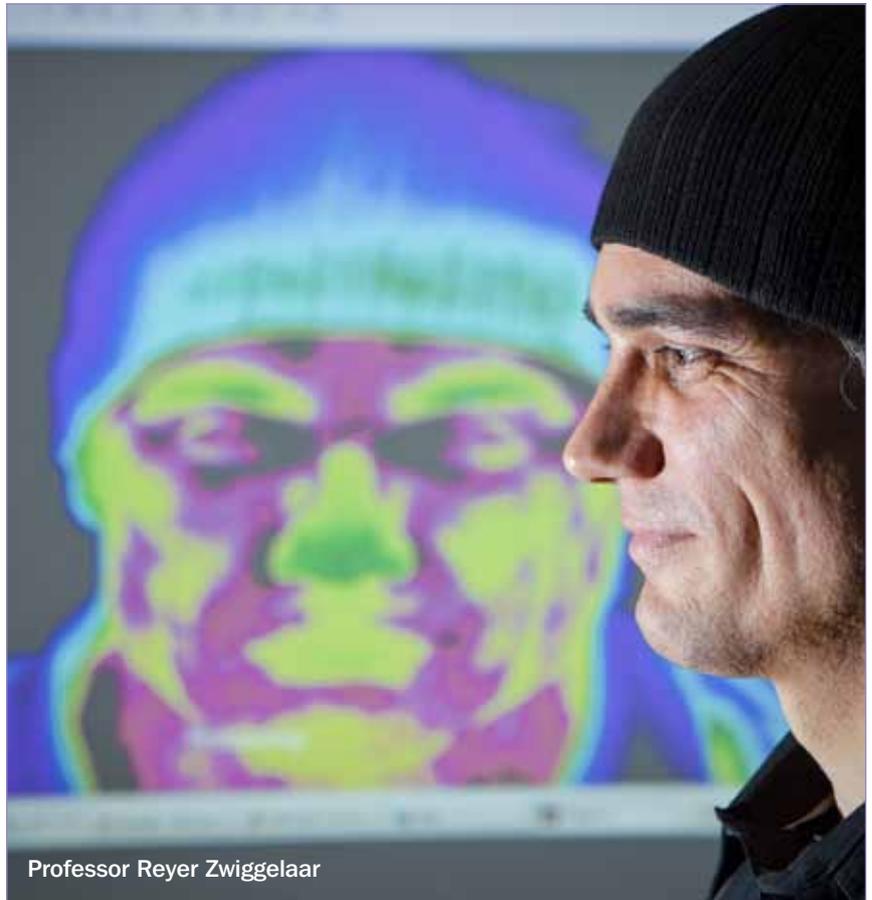


Image by Maria Gill

PhD student Emily Mockford suggests “the next step is to find out what females make of these different songs - will they want to mate with a guy who sings too high or too low?”

# Beyond the face

It's written all over their face - Aber researchers make an impact with the technology of the future



Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar

A groundbreaking surveillance system that analyses facial behaviour and temperature to identify smugglers at border control points in real time is being developed at the Computer Science Department in Aber.

Cameras will record people while they are queuing or being questioned at border control points to study facial expression, patterns of eye movements and the degree of dilation of the pupils.

Professor Reyer Zwiggelaar of the department explained, “Individuals, to a certain extent, are able to manage their facial expressions and mask their true emotions. Our technology is based on the modelling of facial expressions, and links these to emotions and physiological processes such as blood flow and eye movement patterns to enable us to gain an insight into individuals’ true feelings and whether or not they are telling the truth.”

The University’s primary aim in developing this technology is to support the UK Border Agency in detecting individuals carrying contraband. Anyone displaying an unusually high number of behaviours associated with deception will be flagged up for further questioning. As well as spotting smugglers, the system could also single out people involved in other types of organised crime, such as people trafficking, the importation of illegal drugs or terrorism. Trials of the system will be carried out at various different locations during the project, including airports and seaports, to ensure that it will work effectively in a variety of situations.

# Tomorrow's world: you, me, the frog and a hell of a lot of hot water

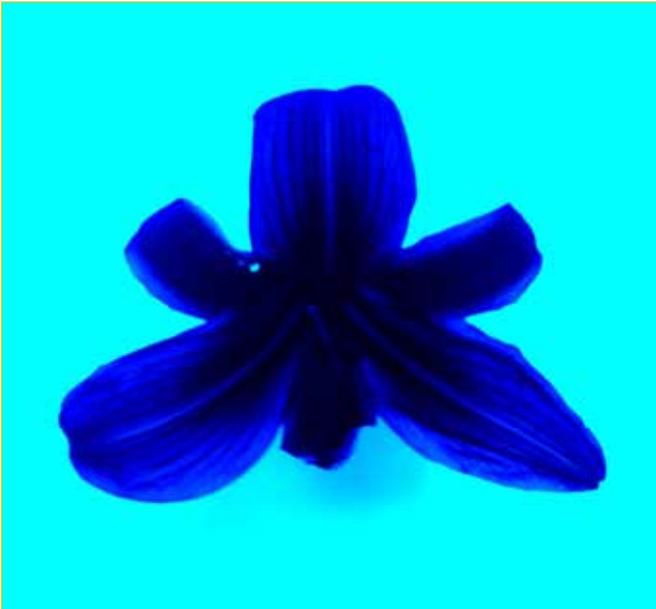
The Cold War era's nuclear fears are nothing compared to the terror of a CO<sub>2</sub>-choked future, says John Warren, with too few botanists left to find ways to save the planet



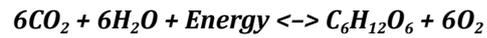


**A**t a tender and impressionable age my generation was systematically and ritually terrified by the State, by being shown the *Protect and Survive* series and other flickering public information films that told us we were all going to die. Back then, the world was a simpler, scarier place. We believed in the technology of *Tomorrow's World*. But we also knew that the same science was probably going to turn us to dust courtesy of Einstein's famous  $E = mc^2$  equation.

Now, of course, working one day a week, commuting by monorail and sporting skin-tight tinfoil suits, we know better. In spite of "Climategate" and the ostrich-like global warming deniers, we know the world is not going to be cooked in an instant like a ready meal in a microwave, but slowly simmered like the mythical frog being boiled in a laboratory, so gently that it does not detect the rise in temperature until it is too late.



In my youth we expected the twenty first century to be the age of physics, but it turns out that the science of our time is biology and the most important of equations is not Einstein's, but the one representing photosynthesis:



Ok, I understand that not everyone appreciates the beauty of equations, so in words it is:

**Carbon Dioxide + Water + Energy  $\leftrightarrow$  Sugars + Oxygen**

Or simpler still:

**Atmospheric Carbon + Water + Energy  $\leftrightarrow$  Fixed Usable Carbon + Atmospheric Oxygen**

For fixed carbon, read: food, plant material, timber and other useful things. But to make this simpler still, albeit even more controversial:

**Lots of Animals = Atmospheric Carbon** (rising global temperatures)  $\leftrightarrow$  **Lots of Plants = Fixed carbon** (all is well with the world).



Photosynthesis is effectively reversible as respiration (the reaction by which animals burn plant material to gain the energy they need to function). Plants capture energy, lock up carbon and make useful things, whereas animals burn useful things to release energy and carbon dioxide.

Cutting the crap, what I am saying is that the world is doomed because we have an imbalance of animals and plants. But any ecologist will tell you that such equilibrium equations balance themselves out naturally. Unfortunately, this equation is currently balanced thus: all living animals (too many humans) are balanced against all living plants, plus many of the dead plants. That is, we can only support a human population of this size because it is supported by oil, coal and gas (the plants of former ages). The only way to balance this is more dead humans, or fewer humans. Neither of these options appears acceptable, so, QED, the earth is screwed.

But perhaps there is a *Tomorrow's World* style technological solution. If we cannot reduce the number of animals, perhaps we can increase the number of plants or their ability to fix carbon. Unfortunately, here again we come crashing into the same equation in another form:

### **Zoologists <-> Botanists**

Nobody wants to be a botanist. Plants are boring, they don't do anything, and animals are majestic, beautiful, cute and dynamic. In a world of free market universities and student choice, we have just ten universities in the UK offering degrees in plant science, each struggling with a handful of students, while there are about forty universities offering zoology, all with students bursting out of the lecture rooms.

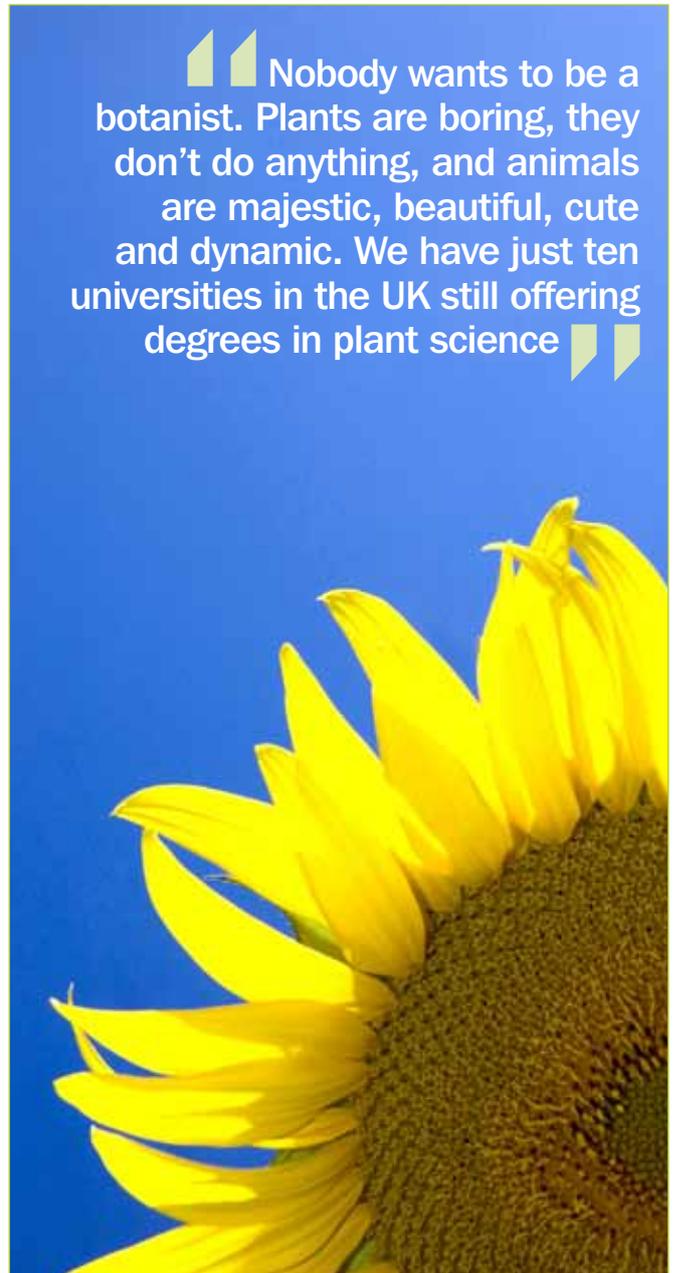
I am not arguing that zoologists are villainous Dr Evils determined to destroy the Earth, but that many of them are plant scientists that we have failed to inspire. So can we save the world and recruit a new generation of botanists? Or do we hope that before they go extinct, the last few plant scientists are able to create a super-efficient biofuel crop?

Nope. As the number of plant science degrees in the UK looks likely to fall again, it's obviously easier to sit in this nice warm beaker with the zoologist and the frog and wonder if it really is getting hot in here. ■

***John Warren is a senior lecturer (grumpy old botanist) in one of the few remaining university departments that is still offering a degree in plant biology - IBERS at Aberystwyth.***

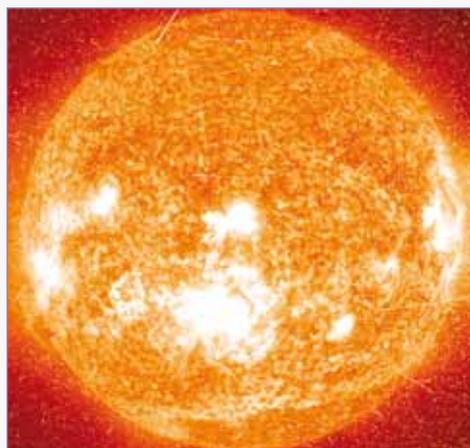
*This article first appeared in Times Higher Education on 17 June, 2010.*

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## Sunny side up for Aber scientists

At the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS) National Astronomy Meeting in April, Dr Mario Bisi of Aberystwyth presented the most complete picture yet of the initiation, launch, travel, and impact of a Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) from the Sun to the Earth. CMEs are giant eruptions of the Sun's atmosphere into space. They typically contain over a billion tonnes of matter and travel at speeds up to several million kilometres an hour.



As an eruption in mid May 2005 approached Earth, it interacted with the ambient solar wind (the material constantly flowing out from the Sun). It deflected some material northward, but was itself slowed as a result of the solar wind ahead of it. The magnetic field of the CME was very intense, and as a result caused the largest geomagnetic storm of 2005.

Dr Bisi, who sees the new analysis in this study as key to our understanding of solar eruptions, said, "Even this apparently simple CME turned out to be incredibly complex and the intense reaction of the Earth's magnetic field was a surprise. All of this adds to our knowledge of the way CMEs originate, develop, and sometimes even have an impact on everyday life."

## IBERS scientists get their oats



Dr Athole Marshall with the winter oats

Oat varieties developed at IBERS currently account for over 60% of the UK oat seed market, with a value of £80m. The Institute is now leading a new study to develop improved varieties of oats that will provide significant benefits for growers, millers and the agriculture industry.

Quality Oats (QUOATS), a £4.9m project funded by BBSRC, Defra, Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Government, brings together the whole of the oat production chain including breeders, crop marketeers, levy boards and industrial end users, and is also expected to enhance health benefits as people turn to oats as part of a healthier diet.

"Oats are a valuable crop in cereal rotations reducing disease and weed problems; they require less fertiliser than wheat, and are a high value animal feed," said Dr Athole Marshall of IBERS. Lesley Griffiths, WAG Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills said, "Projects like these can create significant benefits for the economy and the environment and it is good to see industry working with academia to develop projects with real commercial potential."

The team will develop oats that provide high energy livestock feed that could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from animal production, and a highly innovative development could be the use of oats to manufacture platform chemicals for the plastics, cosmetics and food industries.



The University Arts Centre Creative Units

## Creative Units win prestigious RIBA Award

The University Arts Centre's Creative Units have won a Royal Institute of British Architects award in the 2010 honours. The project, designed by Heatherwick Studios, is one of seven buildings from Wales which received RIBA Awards this year, and one of seventeen award winners in schools and universities throughout Europe, for buildings that have achieved high architectural standards and make a substantial contribution to the local environment.

The Units were designed to develop the Arts Centre's role as a hub for arts businesses and practitioners, and have led to a creative and stimulating environment. The project also links into the University's Commercialisation Unit and Spinout Scheme and the Welsh Assembly's strategy to prioritise development of the creative industry sector.

With their distinctive 'crinkled steel' finish, their unique look has proved to be a real draw for creative companies.

# A Tradition of Change

Aberystwyth University has plans to develop Penglais campus but, despite the advent of cutting edge technologies and new ideas, the overall vision was established in the early decades of the last century

“ ...on Penglais,  
the new facilities that  
have already been  
established are proving  
very successful...” ”

“Growth is the essence of life, and in every institution, the limbs and the body must be developed and improved, as well as the mind and the spirit.”

Writing in 1932, the President of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Lord Davies, set out the institution’s vision for the future. While recognising that “the worth of a college cannot be measured by its buildings and equipment,” he emphasised the importance of “the influence of imposing buildings, of spacious and healthy surroundings, the necessity for modern equipment and all the other technical improvements in the art of Higher Education.”

Plus ça change...

As part of its current strategic plan, Aberystwyth University has ambitious plans to improve its facilities and resources for students over the next five years. This will involve drawing the University together, both physically and in spirit, to create a more cohesive institution that will continue to play a prominent role in the Higher Education sector in Wales and worldwide.

The current sprawling nature of the University is to be rationalised, with most activities concentrated on the Penglais campus. The idea is that bringing all elements of the University closer together will facilitate interaction and communication, making it easier for individual departments to know what others are doing and thereby promoting understanding and collaboration between different parts of the whole.



In recent years several new buildings have been built on the campus, and plans are under way to transform the layout of Penglais to make it more attractive and user-friendly. Over the coming years, new halls of residence will be built opposite the campus on Penglais Hill which will accommodate 1,000 students. This will free current buildings, such as Penbryn, to be used for academic purposes.

Another very important development is the move to reduce drastically the number of cars on campus, making it greener and more pedestrian friendly. This plan also includes upgrading footpaths by widening them and, for the first time, creating a real focus for the campus on the Piazza between the Hugh Owen Building, the Arts Centre and the Students’ Union, with all paths ultimately leading there. Work is already underway to improve the Piazza environment. This year’s Annual Fund contributed additional seating, planting and shade in the area, which were in place and proved very successful during graduation week in July.

But what of the Old College which, as in 1932, for many has been the embodiment of the spirit of Aberystwyth University?

## A Tradition of Change

Dr John Harries, Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Human Resources and Estates, is in no doubt that the building has a bright future.

"We as a university consider that the Old College holds a place of affection and significance," said Dr Harries, "both as a powerful symbol of the effort taken to create the University itself and as a tangible reflection of its provenance as a long-standing, 'traditional' university. The University is actively exploring options for the re-development of the building."

These options include new potential uses which would draw in community and business groups, for example as a publicly accessible national or regional centre for archives or a centre for visual culture and an art gallery with a restaurant.

**“ This is the beginning of a new phase for the University, but is also a continuation of what was begun back in 1932... ”**

Meanwhile, back on Penglais, the new facilities that have already been established are proving very successful. The transformation of Penbryn hospitality services has created the award-winning TaMed Da and TaMed Bach restaurants and the MedRus Conference Centre, attracting clients from far and wide. Meanwhile, students at Cwrt Mawr hall of residence are benefiting from the conversion of Rosser Bar into a learning centre with full computer facilities and group working spaces, responding to the changing needs of twenty first century university students. This follows on from an



extremely successful 'computer bar' already established across the road at Pentre Jane Morgan.

This is the beginning of a new phase for the University, but is also a continuation of what was begun back in 1932. Lord Davies' words then are just as relevant today. As he said at the time, the plans put forward are "an attempt to legislate for the future, and to inspire not only ourselves, but also our successors with zeal for the cause. Each generation will vie with its predecessor in contributing its quota until the scheme is completed. Where there is no vision, the people perish." ■



# Small town, big impact

**Aberystwyth Alumni have always known that their university punches above its weight, and a case in point is the 2010 general election, when twelve former students were elected to the House of Commons - a significantly higher number in proportion to its size than virtually any other British university with the exception of Oxbridge.**

In July, alumnus Mark Williams MP sponsored a reception for these MPs at the House of Commons, during which he recalled his time at the University with affection: "I have very fond memories of my time as a student at Aber from both an academic and social perspective.

"I believe that the warmth of feeling towards the University and the town is unrivalled; it is an honour to be representing the constituency within which my former university is located."

Vice-Chancellor Professor Noel Lloyd said, "The University is proud of its

alumni and their achievements and we are delighted that the University is so well represented at Westminster by its graduates.

"I am sure that the experiences gained during their time at university have strongly influenced their career paths. Universities are entering difficult economic waters but Aberystwyth will continue to build on success in its consistent student satisfaction ratings and the immensely exciting research projects in many disciplines across the University."

Aberystwyth University President, Sir Emyr Jones Parry, stated that the University was in good shape to meet the challenges ahead. He noted the "importance of a gathering like this in such a place at the very centre of our democracy".

Other guests at the event included alumni and University Fellows from the House of Lords and representatives of Aber's extended family from business and commerce, the professions and academia. ■



“... The University is proud of its alumni and their achievements and we are delighted to be so well represented at Westminster by its graduates”

Pictured below are ten of the twelve Aberystwyth University alumni elected as Members of Parliament at the reception in the House of Commons. (Left to right) **Stephen Gilbert** (Liberal Democrat, St Austell and Newquay); **Dan Rogerson** (Liberal Democrat, North Cornwall); **Gareth Thomas** (Labour, Harrow West); **Jonathan Edwards** (Plaid Cymru, Carmarthen East and Dinefwr); **Guto Bebb** (Conservative, Aberconwy); **Chris Ruane** (Labour, Vale of Clwyd); **Rehman Chishti** (Conservative, Gillingham and Rainham); **Elfyn Llwyd** (Plaid Cymru, Meirionydd Dwyfor); **Mark Williams** (Liberal Democrat, Ceredigion); **Bob Stewart** (Conservative, Beckenham). Absent from the photograph are **Lady Sylvia Hermon** (Independent, North Down); **Glyn Davies** (Conservative, Montgomeryshire).



**Dr Rebecca Davies,**  
Director of Information  
Services, considers the  
changes facing libraries  
and information services  
in the twenty first century



# Talking about a revolution



Dr Rebecca Davies

In the same ways as ‘practitioners’ in agriculture and manufacturing changed what was possible during their respective revolutions, university library and information services staff have developed services and tools that exploit the advancing information age. By playing our part in this revolution, we’ve seen creativity, communication, ingenuity and collaboration in ways we couldn’t have dreamed of previously. More people browse the University library journals from their homes and offices (or even, in Aberystwyth, on the beach!) than ever used the paper copies. Timetables are accessed via the web, and travel times to meetings are cut down to a stroll to your videoconferencing suite on campus. We simply can’t imagine a time when we were restricted by the need for paper to be transported from one place to another – try to think back to times when memos hadn’t yet become emails and written feedback from conferences to colleagues was delivered weeks after the event - as opposed to real time twitter feeds.

Library and information services are now integrated into all working practices – in every way. Once you had to make a

deliberate choice to use our computing services and visit our libraries, but now we’re in everyone’s office, in all the study bedrooms and flooding open spaces with WiFi. One of my favourite moments during this year’s student induction events was seeing a girl sitting on her rucksack, with all of her belongings on the floor beside her, as she set up her computer account. When I asked if she wanted to get to her accommodation first she exclaimed “it’s more important to get the internet than a bedroom”. This might be an extreme example, but it demonstrates that we’re part of people’s lives – and this is a responsibility that we can’t take lightly. I recognise that students and colleagues have incredibly high expectations of our services – when they see a ‘tomorrow’s world’ news report on a new technology they think this is a promise and that it will be available on their laptop in the morning...

We can be very proud in Wales that our library and information services have met so many of the expectations of our users during the first part of our digital revolution. We have a vibrant library and information sector that actively collaborates through WHELP (Wales Higher Education Libraries Forum) and HEWIT (Higher Education Wales Information Technology forum). The annual Gregynog colloquium showcases the talents we have within the sector in

Wales – and we’re world class. Our future challenge is to exploit the opportunities that technology and information access offer in the testing times ahead. These have been described by JISC in the ‘Edgeless University’ (2009) as a perfect storm; “Rising demand, expectations and diversity are confronting a shortfall in funding ... Online tools and open access offer the means for survival.” Here at Aberystwyth we work hard to bring together the creativity of our library and information professionals with our academic colleagues and students to deliver ingenious solutions during the squalls of this perfect storm (oh, Michael Fish where are you!?)

In addition to focussing on technical innovations, I can’t forget that there are enduring services that are important to students. Recently, I took a photograph of students studying in the library in the same location as a photo taken in 1977. They are mirror images of each other, students (with remarkably similar hairstyles and clothes!) sitting quietly, reading and concentrating. Only when you focus in do you notice the addition of laptops and mobile devices.

For the future, delivering the right technology will be as important as providing effective study spaces and you can’t do one without the other in the digital age. 📖

# Treading on the toes of North Greenland's Sleeping Giants

Dr Alun Hubbard



**P**etermann Glacier, the largest in the northern hemisphere, lies well above the Arctic Circle. It's an outlet glacier draining over 10% of the Greenland ice sheet to deliver 12 billion tonnes of ice to the sea each year. There, hemmed in by towering 1,000m high limestone cliffs, this giant ice conveyor continues its journey afloat (as an ice shelf) for 50 miles down a 12 mile wide fjord to the Kennedy Channel and the Arctic Ocean. It is a vast and surreal landscape – the air so crystal clear that mountains 100 miles away look close enough to touch and the maelstrom of blues from the sky, ocean and ice leave the senses reeling. Add to this sleep deprivation that comes from continuous and intense sunshine, an eight hours on and four hours off work schedule and just the occasional polar bear for company, then one gets an inkling of the mind-bending experience that is polar fieldwork.

In May of 2009, with colleagues Richard Bates (St Andrews) and Jason Box (Ohio State), I was invited aboard the Greenpeace ship, *Arctic Sunrise*, as an independent scientist

to provide an objective assessment of the changes taking place across this remote region of the Arctic. I jumped at the chance as the region was a blank-slate in terms of baseline data and only a handful of people had even set foot there.

Furthermore, I was intrigued by the idea of a Greenpeace expedition – they certainly put themselves about and the prospect of a helicopter and a bunch of motivated militant activists at my disposal in the name of science (without having to fill in the paperwork) was appealing. I was also interested in the Greenpeace media machine - would they try to vet findings and place pressure on my reporting to toe the party line? I relish a heated argument and I wondered how many hippy fruit-loops I could offend before getting keel-hauled. My suspicion was that these huge northern outlet glaciers (sleeping giants) of the Greenland ice sheet were well beyond the effects of recent climate change – the mean temperature of  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  being just too frigid for the degree or so of 'anthropogenic warming' to make a hoot of difference.



Ignorance is bliss and so it was with mild surprise and slight frustration that I found myself aboard the *Arctic Sunrise* at the end of June sailing into a Kennedy Channel that was completely devoid of ice. To put it in perspective, only half a dozen ships have ever navigated this channel; it is usually so choked up with multi-year sea-ice, brash and bergs that only the largest and most powerful of the Canadian icebreakers ever attempt it. The advice from one captain was “just don’t go there” and hence, for us aboard the puny *Arctic Sunrise*, to find the Kennedy Channel clear of *all* ice was not only a letdown (or relief, depending on your disposition) but also highly perplexing. I’ve not often had my preconceptions completely shattered but this was the start of a six week field campaign that upended my ideas of Greenland, Greenpeace and the vulnerability of the Arctic.

Once *Arctic Sunrise* was moored off the front of Petermann Glacier, it was quite evident that we were looking over a vast icescape that was far from frigid, but stagnating in situ; the edge of the ice shelf was not calving, it was too

thin and down-wasted to form bergs. But this didn’t make sense – the brief summer is not warm enough to melt the 700m thickness of the glacier conveyor that enters the fjord. Hence, the next five weeks became a mission to establish what was going on; an ambitious task and after hundreds of oceanographic profiles, the deployment of a network of dozens of high-precision GPS systems, weather stations and time-lapse cameras it was clear that the demise of Petermann’s ice shelf was also the key to the total lack of sea-ice in the Kennedy Channel.

Early one morning towards the end of my watch taking CTD (conductivity, temperature and depth) profiles from the ship, Paul, the first mate, called down from the bridge that the sea was warm enough to “go take a skinny-dip”. I laughed and shouted back “rather you than me”, but he was quite serious; the ship’s hull transducer was recording sea-surface temperatures of +15°C (warmer than Aber given our usual summer!). On examining the transect of CTD profiles, we’d recorded a 30 mile wide slug of 12°C water to 20m deep which



## Treading on the toes of North Greenland's Sleeping Giants

was moving in under the front of Petermann. Water is ten times more effective at melting ice than air at the same temperature ... this abnormal southerly current was the reason why the Kennedy Channel was ice free and the Petermann shelf was wasting away ... its underbelly was being eroded by warm ocean circulation.

It is easy to measure the surface of a glacier – getting at its base is more challenging. To confirm this theory I put an outlandish idea and an eager crew of activists to work. Our plan to ski or walk the ice shelf was impossible as the shelf was too crevassed and intersected by melt-channels. However, within the inventory of the *Arctic Sunrise* were four kayakers and so, under a sky as blue as the tributary into which my paddle blades dipped, I kayaked into the flow of one of Petermann's major meltwater channels which meandered 30 miles down-glacier to the ice front. We devised a plan to measure the rates of basal melt using the Aberystwyth 'deep-look' ice radar strung between the kayakers. It was a bold undertaking, not least as this channel ended in a moulin-whirlpool plunging to the base of the glacier.

It was also the perfect combination of adventure, science, stupidity and photo-opportunity to mobilize the militant (and by now slightly bored) crew of the *Arctic Sunrise*. It was also a lot of fun and a strangely surreal experience. The surroundings were otherworldly, the icescape morphing with each bend, babbling creeks, idyllic eddies, ice canyons, distant cliffs – and the hours swept by as fast as the crystal water below. The smooth riverbed was a kaleidoscope of patterns and shades, remnant snapshots of the glacier's history. By afternoon, the melt had reached its peak flow of 10 km/hr and we surged into a canyon land of tight chicanes before attaining our exit point. I got my radar snap-shot to corroborate the rapid melt-rates under the ice shelf and came away with some of the most vivid memories of a lifetime, just eight hours long.

I also came away with new found respect for the inspired and fearless curiosity, improvised 'can-do' approach and commitment of the Greenpeace crew and a strong sense that the Arctic environment is not quite as robust as I had previously thought. ■

**Dr Alun Hubbard is a glaciologist and a Reader at the Institute of Geography & Earth Sciences at Aberystwyth.**

**Update:** In July 2010 a further disintegration of the glacier was recorded by the scientists, with the ice front retreating 30km and forming a 250km super-berg. This event will form the basis of the next investigation of the glacier, with scientists returning to determine if the breakup has led to a further destabilisation of the remaining floating ice tongue and acceleration and thinning of the grounded ice feeding it from upstream. They also wish to take further measurements of the glacier and the surrounding oceanic waters and to monitor the drift and disintegration of the super-berg. This year marks yet another record breaking melt year in Greenland; temperatures and melt across the entire ice sheet have exceeded those in 2007 and of historical records.

As well as studying Greenland glaciers, IGES is also involved in a project studying glacier response to climatic fluctuations across the Himalayan range, funded by the Joy Welch Charity.



# The Turbulent Journey from Dock Green to the twenty first century

Dr Tim Brain (left) and Professor John Williams



**A**fter serving with the police for over thirty years, at the start of 2010 Dr Timothy Brain OBE, QPM, BA, PhD, FRSA, retired from his post as Chief Constable of Gloucestershire. Before joining the police, Dr Brain was a student at Aberystwyth University – indeed he captained the University’s team in the BBC television series *University Challenge* in 1976. He was made a Fellow of the University in 2007.

Shortly after his retirement, Dr Brain published *A History of Policing in England and Wales from 1974: A turbulent journey*. As the sub-heading to the book suggests, this was a turbulent period in British history which saw major policing campaigns such as the Miners’ Strike of 1984 and serious investigations such as the Yorkshire Ripper case.

Dr Brain recently returned to Aberystwyth, and discussed his book with an old friend of his, Professor John Williams, who has also recently stepped down as the Head of the University’s Department of Law and Criminology.

**JW:** Tim, you chose as your title *A History of Policing in England and Wales from 1974: A turbulent journey*. Is the role of modern policing still based on *Dixon of Dock Green*?

**TB:** The Police are the only major public service still influenced by a 1950s television character and it is hard to change that. Policing has to respond to events from the most serious incidents to minor problems at home, and crime investigation ranges from the Yorkshire Ripper or terrorism, to petty crime. Finally, there is community policing – *Dixon of Dock Green*. This is almost the foundation for civic order, which is what Peel was aiming for in 1829. The police must do all of these and keep them in balance.

**JW:** Should modern policing be ‘soft’ or ‘hard’, or a bit of both?

**TB:** When resources are tight, the primary focus must be response. The bobby on the beat is desirable, but early response is essential and it is better to have officers in cars. Dixon worked in an era where only the corner shop had a telephone. Today everybody has a mobile, which creates massive demand. Three things made community policing possible in the 2000s. It fitted in with New Labour, they provided the funding, and it obtained street credibility from America. If it came from America, it was often adopted. Whether this continues is a tricky question.

**JW: Lord Denning emphasised that Chief Constables derive their power from being a 'constable' and are 'independent of the executive'. Do they have too much independence?**

**TB:** Naturally, I would say no. It relates directly to the office of constable so it is not simply a question of saying the chief is in control. Some of my former colleagues refer to 'operational independence' and this annoys me because they do not understand what they are saying. That is a minor part of the debate and is to do with who, for example, should authorise a raid on a local lap-dancing club. Politicisation is really about having the mechanism of policing influenced by politics; we must strive to preserve true political independence, it is the defining feature of a policing system.

**JW: Does Boris Johnson's 'removal' of Ian Blair as Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police undermine the independence of the office?**

**TB:** Some would argue that Blair's appointment was political, but he went through open and competitive recruitment. Of course, when appointing any commissioner governments look for somebody to fill a particular mould. It is interesting to think what would have happened if Blair had refused to go when Johnson met with him. Although this was a cataclysmic event, Blair was undermined by the repercussions from his response to the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes. It was difficult to come back from that. If I were Johnson, I would argue that the dismissal was not political, but you can see why some people say it was. Far from opening

the floodgate of political dismissals, it has caused people to step back and say if this is what it means, then we should not do it again.

**JW: What are the consequences of this for the Metropolitan Police as it has both national and local responsibilities?**

**TB:** What comes out of this is what I call the 'municipalisation of the Metropolitan Police'. The constitutional relationship used to be between the Commissioner and the Home Secretary, but now about one quarter of its budget comes from the Mayor's Office and the Metropolitan Police Authority, yet the Met clings onto national functions. What in some respects Johnson did was to effectively remove the head of United Kingdom counter-terrorism and that in my view is inappropriate. By all means have a police chief responsible for policing London; but that begs the question who should run national policing, in particular counter-terrorism? That must be a separate individual accountable to a separate authority.

**JW: One of your most significant achievements as Chief Constable was the strategic plan for policing Gloucestershire. Apart from strategic thinking, what are the qualities of a Chief Constable?**

**TB:** You need to get the big picture, and yet be able to manage the detail. Detail is important because it is there that your plan can unravel. You must organise your people and motivate them. Then you have to handle the 'stuff', the unpredictable events. You must handle crises,



large or small, national or local – the Gloucestershire floods in 2007, industrial unrest, or dealing with the discipline of individual officers.

**JW: It is a cliché, but does the Chief need to be a copper’s cop?**

**TB:** I would not describe myself as a copper’s cop. However, I am a police officer to my fingertips. I have strong views on what the Service should be and how it should be protected from inappropriate influence. Chiefs must work out what they are responsible for and what politicians are responsible for and, in the context of policing, politicians are not directly responsible for much. Now many politicians are trying to become much more involved in the running of forces. As Chief Constable, you must be prepared to say to politicians: “it is interesting what you say, but it has nothing to do with you.” That is getting much harder to do.

**I would not describe myself as a copper’s cop. However, I am a police officer to my fingertips**

**JW: The 2007 flooding in Gloucestershire was a significant event and an interesting case study of modern policing. You were central to the process – in control of it. The Tri-Service control centre, which you were instrumental in establishing, came into its own. From where did you get all this power?**

**TB:** The floods encapsulate much of the role of Chief Constable. It was ‘the big one’ – I reflected on what it would mean to have a county without clean water. In some respects we had to stretch the office of chief constable to get things done. The guidance under the Civil Contingencies Act identifies the Chief Constable as the person who coordinates. I ended up doing crazy things like mediating between the water regulator and Severn Trent. One interesting point: when we asked for help from the military (and we asked – it was not imposed), the procedure ensured that the military was placed under my control which worked well.

**JW: Charles Clarke as Home Secretary proposed the amalgamation of forces, but you resisted this. In terms of more effective policing rather than cost saving, surely there is a case for larger police forces?**



**TB:** Going back to Denning’s independence point, as Chief Constable, unlike many other leaders of government organisations, I could comment openly on the inappropriateness of Clarke’s proposals. Any paring down of that independence may mean that in future this is not possible. Effective policing is a trade off: cost is relevant, but must be measured against the balance of response, investigation, community policing and public accountability. The larger you get, the harder that becomes. In addition, local identity is important; during the floods, there would not have been the same public confidence in the police if it were controlled from a western regional capital.

**JW: You say the journey ends much as it begins. Policing is in better shape than it was thirty five years ago. Do you think that the next thirty five years will be as turbulent?**

**TB:** The past thirty five years have seen political and social upheaval – industrial unrest and urban riots. If this is replicated in the next thirty five years, then turbulent times will reoccur and the fabric built up since the nineties could disintegrate. Losing resources quickly will be a mini crisis, but not an irrecoverable one. Losing twenty five per cent of resources, on the other hand, will wipe out the gains of the past fifteen years. Response and crime investigation will win out over community policing. Another problem is the threat of politicisation. Of the two threats, it is the constitutional one that is more disturbing. The distinguishing feature of policing in this country is its political independence and we should do nothing to compromise that. This is the real threat. ■

# Pioneering Science and a groundbreaking Appointment



Professor Gareth  
Edwards-Jones

In the first move of its kind in the UK, the supermarket Waitrose has sponsored a Chair in Sustainable Agriculture in the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERS) at Aberystwyth as part of its drive to develop the links between the science and business of food production. After an international search the post has been filled by an academic from Wales. Gareth Edwards-Jones has been working as Professor of Agriculture and Land Use at Bangor University since 1998, and before that he was Head of the Rural Resource Management Department at the Scottish Agricultural College in Edinburgh. In an innovative agreement between Aberystwyth and Bangor, he will now split his time equally between both universities.

Professor Edwards-Jones was brought up on a farm outside Denbigh in north

Wales, and was educated at Ysgol Glan Clwyd, St Asaph. He studied for a BSc in Biology at Manchester University and a PhD in Population Ecology at Imperial College, London. He then decided to follow a more applied route and worked on weed control in sugar beet before moving to Edinburgh in 1990. He has a broad range of interests which includes understanding the emissions of greenhouse gases from agriculture, the economics of nature conservation and the economics of disease in the food chain. Professor Edwards-Jones' priorities for his new role are "to learn more about how supply chains are managed in the real world. It's only if scientists understand the whole food chain, from farm through retail store to consumer, that we can provide the holistic and integrated solutions to our food problems that society demands".



The new Professor already has experience of working with Waitrose, as for the last year he has been calculating the carbon footprint of fifty horticultural products supplied by the retailer. Now that the growers and Waitrose have an understanding of the greenhouse gas emissions from the fruit and vegetables, they are working together to bring about reductions in the supply chains.

**... why shouldn't teams from two neighbouring universities get together to tackle important agricultural questions?**

In his new role at Aberystwyth, Professor Edwards-Jones hopes to undertake similar analyses for the lamb and beef supply chains. As he says, "Many people know ruminants release methane, which is a greenhouse gas, and there are some

people who think that we should stop eating red meat for the good of the planet. There is some logic behind this thinking, but this argument ignores the many benefits that livestock and pastoral farming provide to society". Given the importance of red meat production to the Welsh rural economy, he is keen to develop methods that minimise the impact of production on the environment, while simultaneously providing financial viability for Welsh farmers.

The work in this area will be greatly helped by the expertise in animal science that exists in IBERS. By linking the knowledge in Aberystwyth on methane production and livestock with the expertise in soils and forestry at Bangor, the new Professor hopes to be able to put together a world class team of scientists that can get to grips with this complex issue. "We are lucky

to have two universities in Wales that have maintained expertise in agriculture and land use, but increasingly, world class science is conducted by large teams of scientists. If we want to compete on the world stage then we need to follow that trend. Nobody thinks it unusual that multinational teams of physicists from many different universities work together on the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland. So why shouldn't teams from two neighbouring universities in Wales get together to tackle important agricultural questions?"

This positive attitude to new ways of working augers well for the future in Aberystwyth, and one can but wish Professor Edwards-Jones and his colleagues well in their work to produce food in the face of the future challenges of climate change and growing human populations. ■

# Aber/Bangor Collaboration

**A**berystwyth has a long tradition of collaboration, and in 2006 established a Research and Enterprise Partnership with Bangor University, with the intention, as Vice-Chancellor Noel Lloyd put it, “to be internationally competitive and to respond to major challenges. The Partnership emphasises the impact of research and the close connection between research and innovation”.

The starting point for the partnership was the formation of four research centres with international aspirations:

- **The Centre for Advanced Functional Materials and Devices**
- **The Centre for Integrated Research in the Rural Environment**
- **The Centre for Catchment and Coastal Research**
- **The Institute for Medieval and Early Modern Studies**

All the centres have developed international links and, through the recruitment of top researchers and the participation of existing high calibre academics, research from these centres is being published internationally and being utilised by policy makers and organisations globally.

**In just three years, the Research and Enterprise Partnership has achieved 120% of its five year target**



Vice-Chancellors Professor Mervyn Jones and Professor Noel Lloyd CBE

In just three years, the Research and Enterprise Partnership has achieved 120% of its five year target with additional research income of £13.25 million secured as either new joint research projects or funding brought in by the new appointments.

Recently, a 'Services to Business' initiative has been developed to build on the existing enterprise activities between Commercialisation and Consultancy Services in Aberystwyth and their opposite number, the Research Innovation Office in Bangor. This new initiative provides a friendly door for business to access the Universities' services, and will formalise a structure and ensure good communication between the two departments whilst continuing to examine opportunities to support the potential broader collaborations between the Partnership and other Welsh institutions.

The formation of the Partnership has encouraged further collaborations between Aberystwyth and Bangor, and also with Cardiff and Swansea Universities. These initiatives include:

- The **Biosciences, Environment and Agriculture Alliance**, a strategic partnership between Aberystwyth and Bangor and the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council (BBSRC), which is the largest multi-disciplinary bio-environmental grouping in the UK.

- **Initial Teacher Education for North and Mid-Wales.** From 2010 this jointly managed Aberystwyth and Bangor University Centre will be one of three national centres training primary and secondary school teachers.
- **Climate Change Consortium for Wales (C3W)**, a £4 million initiative financed by the Welsh Assembly Government, the Countryside Council for Wales and Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff and Swansea universities.
- The Welsh Assembly Government **Research Institute of Visual Computing (RIVIC)** is the first pan-Wales National Research Centre. The Centre strengthens the research partnerships between University computer science departments.
- **SEACAMS (Sustainable Expansion of the Applied Coastal and Marine Sectors)** is the strategic integration of catchment and coastal science and management expertise in Wales, which will provide the science to meet the challenge of sustainable use of the sea in a rapidly changing marine environment.

As well as sustaining current activity, the Partnership is exploring other initiatives. Central Services opportunities are being examined by a newly formed group, with managers from both institutions exploring ways of joint working and integration of some services. Welsh medium opportunities continue to be explored in the context of the emerging Welsh Federal College, for closer collaboration in the promotion and delivery of Welsh medium provision. 



[www.aber.ac.uk/visitors](http://www.aber.ac.uk/visitors)

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# Aber Abroad

The past year has been a great one for international alumni with events and reunions being held worldwide. The increasing number of Aberystwyth University staff travelling abroad to assist with international recruitment, research collaborations and alumni activity provides opportunities to meet with former students and staff across the globe. From assisting at a recruitment fair through to hosting a reception or attending an event, Aber alumni have shown their support and enthusiasm, which is hugely appreciated.

The Aberystwyth University Alumni Club of Malaysia, the largest and most active group, has a full calendar of events for alumni in Malaysia. Some of the highlights from the past year include the dinner held to honour

Aberystwyth graduate and now State Ruler of Negeri Sembilan, HRH Tuanku Muhriz; a reception with Aberystwyth University President, Sir Emyr Jones Parry, at the British High Commissioner's Residence and numerous family golf days.



Alumni reunion in Hong Kong

To complement the visit of Nick Strong (Department of Theatre, Film and TV) and Jonathan Richards (Director of International Recruitment and Collaboration) to Hong Kong, a group

of alumni met up at the Red Bar in Hong Kong's tallest building. An evening of reminiscing and catching up on developments at Aber was enjoyed by alumni and staff alike.

Despite the Icelandic volcano's activity which prevented Rachel Tod (European Officer) visiting Athens in April, the Aber spirit in the city was undampened and the alumni reunion went ahead. Close to seventy Aber alumni met up at the Divani Carvel Hotel in Athens and we are now looking forward to an annual event of this kind.



Alumni reunion in Athens

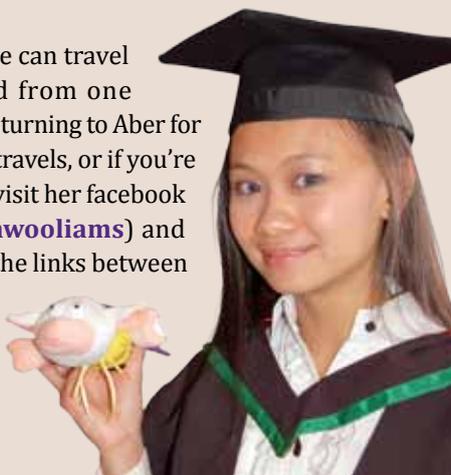
The University intends building on these successes with a series of international events planned for the forthcoming academic year. In particular, the Development and Alumni Relations Office will be visiting the United States and Australia during November and December and various locations in Asia during January. Further details of events and locations can be found on the alumni web pages ([www.aber.ac.uk/en/development](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/development)), so if you live in these areas or will be visiting, please get in touch as we'd love to see you there.

Additionally, the International Recruitment and Collaboration team regularly travels to a number of countries to attend recruitment fairs and promote the opportunities available at Aberystwyth University. The team would love to meet Aber alumni and offer a warm welcome to any who come along to the education fairs. Help with linguistic barriers is always gratefully received and greatly valued. Details of planned international visits can be found on the IRC web pages [www.aber.ac.uk/en/international](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/international) ■

## Baabaa Wooliams – alumni travel buddy

A rather unusual and recent addition to the alumni family is Baabaa Wooliams. Baabaa, as the name implies, is a small white sheep aptly dressed in an Aberystwyth University branded super hero costume (think bright yellow lycra and purple cape) who left Aber with travel buddy Melissa Tan at the end of Graduation Week.

Baabaa's mission is to see how far she can travel around the globe by being passed from one alumnus to another before hopefully returning to Aber for Graduation Week 2011. To follow her travels, or if you're lucky enough to be visited by Baabaa, visit her facebook page ([www.facebook.com/baabaawooliams](http://www.facebook.com/baabaawooliams)) and look out for her photos as she makes the links between Aber graduates.



# Three of the Best for Aber Alumni at the National Eisteddfod

The three main literary prizes at the Blaenau Gwent and Heads of the Valleys National Eisteddfod at Ebbw Vale this year were deservedly won by former students of Aberystwyth University, to national acclaim



Glenys Mair Glyn Roberts

**G**lenys Mair Glyn Roberts from Llantrisant was crowned for her series of poems on the subject *Newid* ("Change").

Having studied Welsh, English and History at Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni, Glenys attended university at Aberystwyth, where she was awarded a first class honours degree in Welsh, and an MA for her work on Celtic Mythology in twentieth century literature. Following a period as a teacher in Tonyrefail, she worked for some years for the Welsh Joint Education Committee in Cardiff before becoming a freelance translator. She has worked as a self-employed translator and editor for almost twenty years and is a member of the Association of Welsh Translators' examining board.

Reading and interpreting poetry has been one of her main interests for many years, but it is only relatively recently that she started writing herself. This was her first submission for the National Eisteddfod Crown.

The winning work is a collection of poems dealing with change in a number of ways, but the main theme is that life's basic patterns – birth, growth, maturity, decay and death - never change. A feeling of change never changing as it were. However, there is an essence in life which provides a meaning for these patterns.



Jerry Hunter

**Dr Jerry Hunter** from Penygroes, Gwynedd, but originally from Cincinnati, Ohio became the first ever American to win a major literary prize at the National Eisteddfod when his novel *Adfywiad*, discussing the effects

of war and post traumatic stress, was awarded the Prose Medal.

Jerry is a Reader in the Welsh Department at Bangor University, but during the 1980s studied for an MPhil at Aberystwyth, during which time he also played in the Welsh funk band Arfer Anfad. He has published four academic books and one of them, *Llwh Cenhedloedd*, won the Welsh Book of the Year Award in 2004. He has also published a short novel for children, *Ceffylau'r Cymylau*, and has presented history programmes on S4C.

The winning volume is based on the medieval Welsh tale of Myrddin Wyllt who became mad during the Battle of Arfderydd, and who would not speak to anybody but his sister, Gwenddydd. The story has been updated and set in the context of the Second World War.

**Tudur Hallam** from Foelgastell, Carmarthenshire was presented with the Eisteddfod Chair for his poem in *cynganedd* (strict metrical alliteration) on the subject *Ennill Tir* ("Gaining Ground").

Tudur is a senior lecturer in Welsh at Academi Hywel Teifi, Swansea University. He was brought up in Penybanc, Ammanford and attended Ysgol Maes yr Yrfa. While a student at Aberystwyth University he twice won the Chair at the Inter-collegiate Eisteddfod. The late Hywel Teifi Edwards, a Fellow of Aberystwyth University, urged Tudur to win the chair for the Department that he led in Swansea. This year, Tudur has obeyed his former professor's wish, and the winning work is an attempt to remember him and to appreciate the relevance of his life and vision to Wales today.

This is not a traditional commemorative work, but rather a story about an old man on New Year's Day, who is too ready to criticise young people and too slow to motivate them. Some may have the view that the old man represents the passive, suspicious, hopeless, whingeing Welsh speaker. The message in the poem is that he must, if he wants to see the language thrive, change his way of life by following the example of the hands-on leader, Professor Hywel Teifi Edwards. ■



Tudur Hallam

# Vice-Chancellor awarded CBE

After seven years as Vice-Chancellor, Professor Noel Lloyd has announced his decision to retire in the summer of 2011.

As Professor Lloyd prepares to leave the institution, it is fitting that his contribution and hard work have been recognised with the award of a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to Higher Education in Wales.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry, President of the University, welcomed this honour: "This recognition of Professor Lloyd's

conspicuous contribution to Aberystwyth University, both as Vice-Chancellor and previously as Registrar, is much deserved".



Professor Lloyd said, "This is a great personal honour but it also reflects an appreciation of the contribution that Aberystwyth University and Higher Education in Wales have made, and continue to make, both culturally and economically."

The University Council has appointed a sub-committee to make arrangements for appointing Professor Lloyd's successor. The appointment is expected to be made early in 2011, with the new Vice-Chancellor in post by next September.

## What Aber Means To Me

Beryl Roberts (1959-62)

**Beryl 'Bel' Roberts donates to the Annual Fund via Direct Debit. A 1962 Aber English and Economics graduate, Bel is now an award-winning author. Her debut novel is called *A Discerning Woman's Guide to Manhunting* (Diadem Books, 2009).**

In September 1959 a Soviet spacecraft crashed into the moon. A month later, the same type of impact hit west Wales as new 'freshers' descended on Aberystwyth.

In 1959, students travelling from south Wales got to know each other on the steam train that puffed through central and west Wales. On our arrival, there was a mad dash for station trolleys – solid iron and wood structures which carried a pile of trunks and cases which we pushed, pulled and rolled to our hostels.

On my arrival at Ceredigion Hall, I met my room-mate, a keen sailor from Milford Haven who regarded our third floor bedroom as a purpose-built crow's nest, from where she could gaze at the horizon and issue weather forecasts of astounding accuracy which determined our daily wardrobe and route to the University. In high winds, we emerged in our coats and scarves and kept to the pavement side, gripping house railings to keep our balance and

hang onto each other as we rounded the bend at the Theological College.

Ceredigion Hall was strategically placed at the centre of the promenade, offering the twin convenience of Ceri Shelter (for late night snogging) and the Marine Hotel (for day and late evening grogging). Ceri's dining room was arranged into 'family' tables. It was a novelty for most of us, being war children, to be offered three good meals a day and a particular luxury that we were never expected to wash the dishes.

We carried no mobile phones, no debit or credit cards and had no internet access. If students were homesick, they hid it well, but being out of touch with home was part of the attraction of being independent.

Men were allowed into hostel rooms for very limited sessions (I use the word advisedly) and rooms did not lock! Everyone, including adults, seemed naïve. My boyfriend and I once moved one of the twin beds against the door to clear space for tiddly-winks practice – rivalry between Plyn and Ceri was hot. Our whoops and cries were interrupted by strenuous door handle rattling. When we had replaced the furniture and opened the door, we encountered the warden who had not suspected any

sexual activity but merely objected to our excessive noise on a Sunday afternoon.

My memories of Aber are all about friendship and laughter; kicking the bar, singing in the backrooms of pubs and performing in Rag Shows.

**“The university needs our support to create optimum learning conditions, so I would appeal to you to make a donation to the Annual Fund a priority. Today.”**

In many ways we had it easier than students do today. Most of us were financed by reasonably generous local authority grants. Students today have different pressures. They have to pay for the privilege of studying and many leave university deeply in debt. I feel that we, the old students, should ease their passage, because they represent our country's investment in the future and their wages will eventually finance our welfare services.

All Aber students are part of our shared experiences of a unique place. The university needs our support to create optimum learning conditions, so I would appeal to you to make a donation to the Annual Fund a priority. Today.

# The Annual Fund

This year saw the launch of the University's Annual Fund. Aber's alumni, parents, Council members and staff responded magnificently to this request for support and over £250,000 was raised. The Fund's success has meant that the aims of all the Annual Fund initiatives, which this year were to finance four modest and achievable projects, have been secured.

In the current economic climate, financial strain on some students has been inevitable. Thanks to the generosity of the Annual Fund's supporters, the **Student Hardship Fund** has been created and this year we can offer far greater emergency financial support to students.

*Dr John Powell, Director of Student Support Services is in a position to appreciate the value of such a fund: "The creation of a Hardship Fund at Aberystwyth University, to provide a bridging loan, emergency relief or enabling services, has been a godsend. It has quite literally made the world of difference for many of our students."*

The Annual Fund's **IT Project** is now nearing completion. Through the University's network, students can access an increasing amount of research and curriculum resources as well as the usual email and internet facilities. Until now, this network was only available on campus or via students' private ISPs. This year's project has installed wireless 'repeaters' throughout the town, providing off-campus access to the university's network and resources to all students living within a mile of the town centre. More is to come:

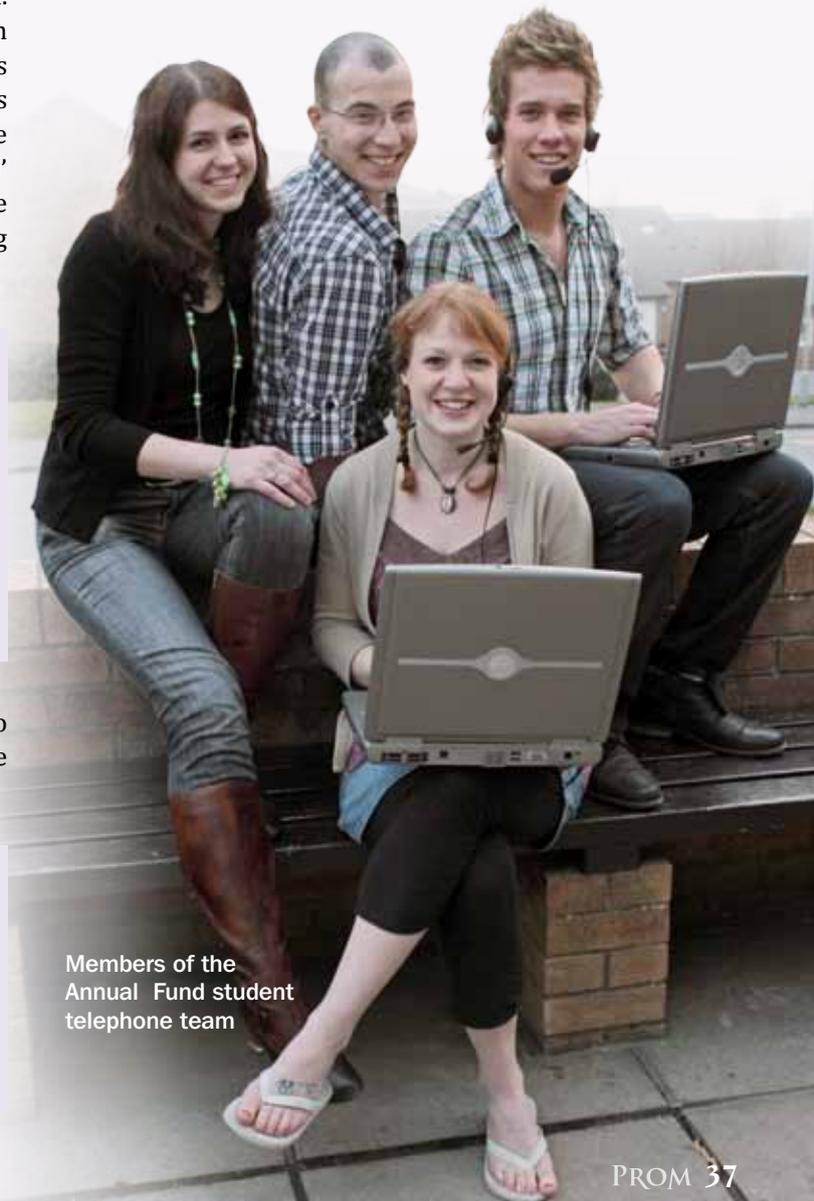
*"We began installing these devices in May 2010, and we are very grateful for the funds that were raised to assist with this progressive project. The success of the wireless devices in central Aberystwyth has led us to investigate the possibility of installing access points even further afield in properties where they accommodate University students," said Mr Roger Matthews, Deputy Director of Information Services.*

In September, the **Sponsored PhD Student** arrived to undertake research into Environmental Politics at the Department of International Politics.

*Dr Carl Death of the Department welcomed the development: "This studentship is an excellent opportunity to conduct focused research into an under-examined, but increasingly important, area of world politics, and to develop the Department of International Politics' expertise in this field."*

The focus of this year's **Environmental Project** was to enhance the Piazza in front of the Arts Centre, placing additional seating, planting and shade in the area, ensuring that this large space remains a bustling hub of student life on campus. The initial phase of this scheme was completed in time for Graduation in July 2010 with more to come over the following months.

Sincere thanks are due to all contributors to the fund for their commitment and enduring affection for the University. This support is especially valuable at this difficult economic time. The University represents different things to different people, but above all else it represents a community. It is this spirit which has ensured the success of this year's Annual Fund, and will ensure its success in the future.



Members of the Annual Fund student telephone team

# **Aber staff play a leading role in the National Theatre of Wales' production of Aeschlyus' *The Persians***



Photo: Toby Farrow

Three members of the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at Aberystwyth (TFTS), played pivotal roles in an extraordinary performance of Aeschlyus' *The Persians* staged at the military training village at Mynydd Epynt in the Brecon Beacons in August. The production, directed by Mike Pearson and designed by Simon Banham and Mike Brookes, was the flagship show in National Theatre of Wales' inaugural season, and came about through Professor Pearson's involvement in an Arts and Humanities Research Council Landscape and Environment Network funded project in 2006-8 that used the site at Epynt for one of its case studies.

In Pearson's theatrical response to the site two years on, Aeschlyus' text, the oldest recorded script in western drama, was used to create a complex weave of meanings that collapsed simple distinctions between past and present and here and there. The setting, the village of Cilieni, is a military training ground from which civilians are usually barred. As Charles Spence said in a review in *The Daily Telegraph*, this setting, a "deeply creepy place used to teach troops how to fight in built-up areas" was "an extraordinary coup" for the company. However, despite the evocation of its setting, the play was not used to comment in any obvious sense on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, this version of *The Persians* is possibly best seen as a continuation of Pearson's projects with the influential Welsh-language company Brith Gof in the 1980s and 1990s, and, more recently, in his collaboration with Mike Brookes. In that work, characterised by what might be called "an archaeology of destruction", Pearson has been concerned to take the temper of the times in Wales. As the communities of Wales brace themselves for reductions in government funding, Pearson's *The Persians* offers a bleak vision of nationhood.

And yet it is precisely the bleakness of the production that secured *The Persians* unanimous critical acclaim in the UK national press. The National Theatre of Wales is to be praised for its innovative approach to site-specific theatre, and its vision in collaborating with pioneering practitioners outside the mainstream.

Review by Dr Carl Lavery, TFTVS



Sian Thomas as Queen Atossa

**Superb  
production**  
(*The Guardian*)

# Kicking the Bar

Deian Hopkin

The Kicking the Bar column was intimately connected with Patrick Hannan, whose unexpected loss this year we all mourn. Patrick and I were not direct contemporaries at Aber but his reputation as a witty and compelling orator remained strong in the Debates Union of my time. Over the years I was fortunate to witness his forensic political skills at first hand on programmes such as *Tea Junction*, the Radio 4 discussion programme. His perceptive, irreverent surveys of Welsh politics in *Wales off Message* and in his numerous columns will be missed, as will his highly successful double-act with Peter Stead on *Round Britain Quiz* – my admiration being all the greater because I never understood the questions let alone the answers!

Another great figure from the same brilliant generation also passed away this year. Gwyn Morgan was one of the Aber ‘Troika’ in Brussels including Nye Rees Hughes, who succeeded him as NUS President, and Hywel Ceri Jones. As Hywel, in his wonderful funeral tribute reminded us, the machinations that prevented Gwyn becoming General Secretary of the Labour Party paved the way for an even more distinguished career in Europe.

Even if we were at Aber at different times, we all felt part of a historical continuum. In my time in the early 1960s, we still wore gowns to dinner at hall and, in my first year, even to lectures as our predecessors had done. There was no licensed student bar and all pubs were closed on Sunday; the ideal, it was said, was to join the Liberal Club for snooker, the Conservative Club for Sunday drinking and the Labour Club for politics! Instead on Sundays we relied on itinerant coffee parties and soirées in various halls, regaled with the College Song, the anti-Fascist anthem *Avanti Populo* and the song-book we shared with several previous generations. All of this, and processing along the Prom to kick the bar, created a powerful link between all of us and perhaps even earlier generations.

On two occasions I remember kicking the bar as a symbolic act. In October 1962, while we freshers were beginning to deconstruct the cultural landscapes of Aber, a great shadow was cast over the world by an international crisis over Russian missile bases in Cuba. War seemed inevitable after President Kennedy issued an ultimatum to Russia as its supply ships neared Cuba. On the evening of the 27<sup>th</sup> October, as the American navy moved ever closer to the Russian vessels, the whole town seemed to have gathered on the Prom. We didn’t sleep that night – instead we walked

“ We didn’t sleep that night - instead we walked the beach endlessly ... and kicked the bar several times as an act of reassurance that we were still alive ”



endlessly, mostly on the beach, and kicked the bar several times as an act of reassurance that we were still alive.

The crisis passed, of course, but it was a huge reminder of our vulnerability. Some weeks later many of us travelled to Penrhyndeudraeth to thank Bertrand Russell for his role in defusing the crisis – unfortunately he wasn't at home, but we still kicked the bar that evening with special relish.

The second occasion in 1964 was somewhat less serious, in global terms, but serious enough for us. The adversaries were the Students' Union, determined to have an alcohol licence, and the College authorities, resolute in maintaining propriety. In protest, Union President Phil Thomas led a long procession through town to the end of the Prom. Incredibly well-behaved we all wore gowns and ties and after lining up to kick the bar as a symbol of defiance we gathered politely to hear speeches and dignified denunciations of those who stood in the way of progress. Whatever magic was contained within the bar, it worked! Idiosyncratically, the concession was for a beer-only licence though our compensation came through the formation of the Newcastle Brown Appreciation Society, a somewhat more intoxicating beverage than the authorities had anticipated!

In many respects, the Aber of those days is long gone – the university is much larger, the geographical centre of gravity has shifted to a considerable degree and the demography of the student body as changed substantially. Even so, the elements of continuity remain strong, more evident in Aber perhaps than in many other universities.



The procession along the Prom in 1964

Recently I attended a reception at the Commons for the dozen Aberystwyth graduates who entered Parliament in 2010. They included, surprisingly, Colonel Bob Stewart of Bosnia fame (Interpol, 1974-77) who was full of praise for his own, life-changing experiences in Aber. Other MPs, albeit of a much more recent generation, spoke with the same level of enthusiasm and affection as did the group of somewhat older Aber peers who were present. In a real sense they have all kicked the bar and profited.

And so it continues - different generations but the same symbolism and cultural imperatives. Or as Patrick might have said, albeit more elegantly, "Aberystwyth - Fu a Fydd." ■

***Professor Sir Deian Hopkin graduated from Aber in History in 1965 and was awarded a PhD in 1981. A former Vice-Chancellor of London South Bank University, he is currently Chair of the Student Loans Company and a Fellow of Aberystwyth University.***

## The College Song

Patrick Hannan's column in the last issue of PROM sadly proved to be his final contribution to the magazine. As usual, it was a very popular part of the publication, and in particular his reference to the College Song stirred up memories for alumni. Neil Sands, who was responsible in the 1990s for the Elizabethan Madrigal Singers sent us an arrangement of the song that he had prepared for that group, and Lorna Riley sent a copy of part of the *Aber Song Book*, which had the sub-title 'Songs to be sung before, during and after every function except Sessions', and as she added "they were, in the forties, with gusto."

It's unlikely that many current students know the song, but seeing it here may inspire some of them to revive it:

Some boast their classic stream  
Where nymphs and naiads dream,  
Their buildings touched by Time till old and grey –  
Our College towers in pride  
By the Western waters' side  
Where wild waves vainly beat along the bay.

**Chorus:** "What may your motto be,  
O College by the Sea?"  
"Nid byd byd heb wybodaeth," answer we,  
Rage ye gales! Ye surges, seethe!  
Aberystwyth fu a fydd!

# Book Shelf

## A selection of recent publications by Aberystwyth academics



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### A History of Independent Television in Wales

*Jamie Medhurst, Department of Theatre, Film and Television  
UWP*

Despite the growing body of work on the media in Wales, very little exists on the history of commercial television in Wales. This book seeks to address this imbalance by tracing the growth and development of ITV in Wales and assessing its contribution to the life of the nation. ITV has been a powerful force in British broadcasting since its inception in 1955. When commercial television came to Wales for the first time in 1958, it immediately got caught up in with matters of national identity, language and geography. Compared with the BBC, it is a relative newcomer; its growth was slower than that of the BBC and it took until 1962 to complete the network across the UK. Once it had arrived, however, its impact was considerable. The book provides an historical narrative and critical analysis of independent television (ITV) in Wales from 1958 up until the present day.

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### New Labour's Countryside: Rural Policy in Britain since 1997

*Editor: Professor Michael Woods,  
Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences  
Policy Press*

Rural policy presented some of the most difficult and unexpected challenges to the 'New Labour' government. From the foot and mouth crisis to the rise of the Countryside Alliance, from farm protests to concerns about rural crime; rural issues frequently seized headlines and formed the basis of organized opposition to the Labour government. Yet the same government, elected with a record number of rural MPs, also proactively sought to reform rural policy. This book critically reviews and analyses the development and implementation of New Labour's rural policies from 1997. It explores the factors that shaped the evolution and form of New Labour's rural agenda, and assesses the impact of specific policies.

Contributors, including Professor Martin Jones, Dr Graham Gardner and Dr Suzie Watkin, all of the Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, examine the discursive restructuring of the rural policy agenda, the institutional reforms and effects of devolution, the key political debates and challenges around hunting, agricultural reform, foot and mouth, housing development and the 'right to roam'; and review policy developments with respect to crime, social exclusion and employment in the countryside, rural community governance and national parks.

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### The Agri-Environment: Theory and Practice of Managing the Environmental Impacts of Agriculture

*Dr John Warren, Clare Lawson and Kenneth Belcher,  
Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences,  
Cambridge University Press*

The application of ecological theory and conservation biology to agricultural ecosystems has become an important and growing research field and undergraduate course component in recent years. This book is both an academic textbook and practical guide to farm conservation, and has evolved from the authors' extensive teaching experience. It covers the ecology of farmed land, how agricultural practices influence the environment, how agriculture has changed over time and how the species that inhabit the agri-environment have adapted. It also covers the history of agricultural policy and subsidies and the development of agri-environment schemes. A number of different farming systems are discussed, as are the difficulties in determining their relative merits. Guidance is offered on how to produce a workable farm conservation plan, and the final chapters look to the future and the development of new, greener farming systems.

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### Managing Visitor Attractions

*Editor: Dr Brian Garrod,  
Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences  
Butterworth-Heinemann*

Visitor attractions represent a complex sector of the tourism industry and are the catalytic focus for the development of tourism infrastructure and services. As this area grows, there are still many questions to be answered and issues to be understood: such as what visitor attractions actually are, what forces drive their development, who visits them and why, how they are funded, and what the numerous day-to-day challenges are in respect of their management and marketing.

Edited by Dr Brian Garrod, along with Alan Fyall, Stephen Wanhill and Anna Leask, the book sets out to address these important questions. The text has been fully revised and updated to include new case studies

on attractions in Singapore, seasonal variation, religion-based attractions, HRM issues and heritage tourism. It also includes five new chapters looking at attraction success and failure, interpretation, school excursions, managing gardens and brand management. Divided into five parts, the book tackles the following core topics: the role and nature of visitor attractions, the development of visitor attraction provision, the management of visitor attractions, the marketing of visitor attractions, future issues and trends. With contributions from around the world, this is an essential text for all students of visitor attraction management.

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### Human Rights in the Market Place: The Exploitation of Rights Protection by Economic Actors

*Professor Chris Harding, Dr Naomi Salmon and Dr Uta Kohl,  
Department of Law and Criminology*

*Ashgate*

The ideology of human rights protection has gained considerable momentum during the second half of the twentieth century at both national and international levels and appears to be an effective lever for bringing about legal change. This book analyses this strategy in environmental and commercial policy and considers the use of the 'public law' discourse of basic human rights protection and its transportation and use in the 'commercial law' context of economic policy, business activity and corporate behaviour.

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### Key studies in sport and exercise psychology

*Professor David Lavallee,*

*Department of Sport and Exercise Science*

*McGraw-Hill Higher Education*

This text provides readers with a volume that examines in-depth some of the most important and influential studies in sport and exercise psychology. Extensive examination of such studies has been historically difficult to achieve in general textbooks in the field. Also, students often wish to learn more about a particular article than textbooks offer or teachers provide in classroom settings. By bringing together a selection of important readings in sport and exercise psychology, this book fills a major gap in academic literature. Each of the book's 23 chapters includes a framework that makes the most efficient use of the material originally published. A Background and Context section is initially provided in order to put the study into a theoretical, practical, and historical context. This is followed by an abridged version of the Key Study itself. A Subsequent Research and Application section concludes each chapter and focuses on research developed since the original study was published, as well as relevant theoretical, methodological, and applied

issues. A list of additional readings is provided in each chapter, along with study questions to stimulate readers to think critically about any theoretical, methodological, statistical and ethical features of the studies.

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### International Retailing

*Professor Nicholas Alexander,*

*School of Management and Business*

*OUP*

Based on the author's successful international retailing textbook, this new volume has been designed to deliver a clear understanding of the retail internationalisation process, considering the supporting theoretical frameworks, international retail activity and the management of international operations.

Structured around four parts, the text guides students through the internationalisation process, considering international markets and how retail enterprises operate within them, before ending with a concluding section that considers future trends. The author discusses what is happening in international retailing, who is making it happen, why it is happening in the way that it is, and how it is happening. The book therefore examines the international retail process in its entirety by reflecting on contemporary research and the practicalities of international retail activity.

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### Health Impact Assessment for sustainable water management

*Professor David Kay and Dr L Fewtrell,*

*Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences*

*IWA Publishing*

This text is the first to take an international perspective seeking to draw generic lessons from both the developed and developing nations' experience in sustainable water management. The approach is being applied in policy development to strengthen the evidence-base and across a wide spectrum of resource developments, industrial and urban infrastructure projects and in aid projects in developing countries. The book illustrates the importance of considering health in water management developments and demonstrates the role of Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in this process. The concept, objectives, terminology and challenges of HIA are introduced and illustrated by case studies including rainwater harvesting, greywater reuse, sustainable drainage and evaluations of the health impacts of flooding. Developing country case studies include a small-scale irrigation project in Zimbabwe, a large hydro-electric scheme in Laos and the implementation issues surrounding the use of domestic wastewater as a resource in demand by agricultural enterprises in Pakistan. As a result, this book will be of interest to planners, developers, policy makers, public health, environmental and water utility scientists and practitioners.

# Old Students' Association

## Time to Move On

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Reflecting on my past two years as President, I am surprised at the pace of changes both within the OSA and in its relationships with what is now Aberystwyth University. This, in turn, probably led to a greater appreciation of the value of and benefits potentially available from its alumni, and the OSA has benefited from closer links with the University. I would like to put on record my appreciation of the advice and friendship of Vice-Chancellor Professor Noel Lloyd and Mrs Dilys Lloyd, wishing them well in retirement and congratulating him on the award of the CBE. I have also appreciated my cordial relationship with Pro Vice-Chancellor John Harries.

Changes that impinge on OSA are in the air. The revised organisation of halls of residence accommodation meant that, in 2010, we were obliged to seek hotel/guesthouse accommodation for those attending the Reunion in Aberystwyth, and to organise the Reunion dinner in the pleasant surroundings of the Aberystwyth Pier bistro. Here, nearly sixty members were entertained by Professor Joe Cartwright and Dr Annabelle Cartwright of Cardiff University, who will be known to many through their participation in the TV 'docusoap' *The Coal House*.

A major preoccupation during the early part of 2010 was the University's decision to consider exchanging the former Student Union building, 10 Laura Place, (the Assembly Rooms) for St Michael's Parish Hall. Number 10 Laura Place had been gifted in the 1920s by the OSA to the College to commemorate former students and staff who had fallen in the First World War. This gift had been 'unencumbered', and it had to be recognised that, with the almost complete relocation of the University's departments to the Penglais campus, the original function of the Assembly Rooms had been largely superseded. The availability of the Parish Hall would be welcomed by the Theatre, Film and Television Department in the University. The OSA was given an undertaking that, if this exchange goes ahead, an appropriate place will be found to display the memorial plaques.

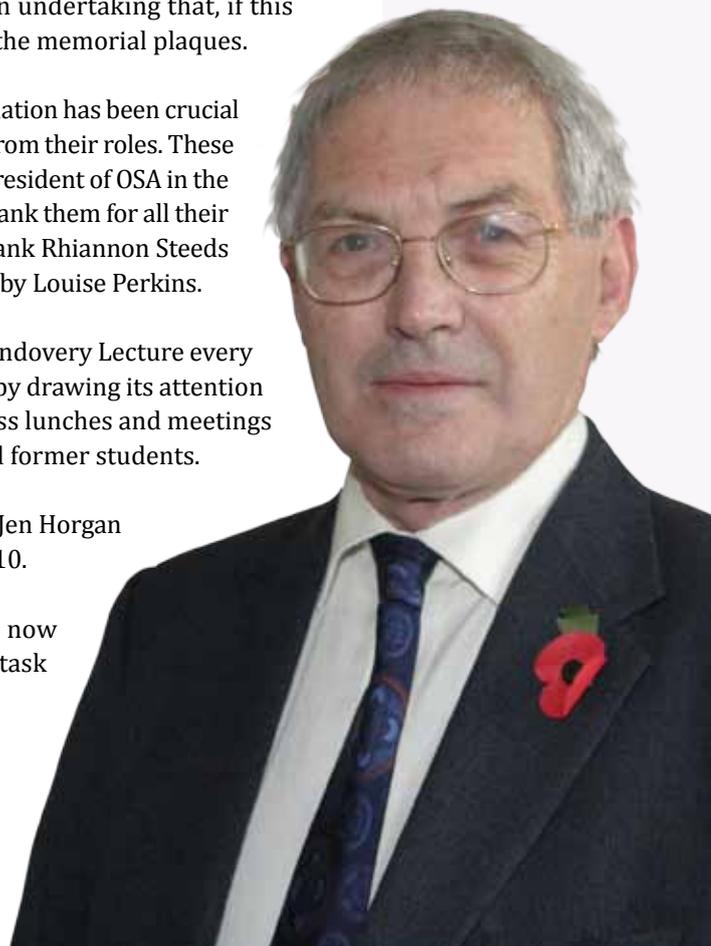
Three members of OSA, whose long and dedicated service to the Association has been crucial for its well-being and success, have indicated their wish to step down from their roles. These are Emrys Wyn Jones and Ifan Moelwyn Hughes, both of whom were President of OSA in the 1980s, and Eleanor James, Treasurer for many years. I would like to thank them for all their years of outstanding commitment and service. I would also like to thank Rhiannon Steeds who was Honorary Secretary until mid-2008, who has been replaced by Louise Perkins.

Tribute should also be paid to Wynne Thomas who organises the Llandovery Lecture every year, and who consistently addresses the University's best interests by drawing its attention to accessible expertise from among its alumni, by organising business lunches and meetings between some of Aber's officers and departments and distinguished former students.

In conclusion, I thank my Vice-Presidents for their help and support: Jen Horgan and John Isaacs in 2008-2009; Kay Powell and Des Hayes in 2009-2010.

Noreen and I wish Kay Powell every success in her Presidency. We now retire to focus our attention on OSA's Travel Group, and on my new task as Editor, following in Ifan Moelwyn's footsteps.

**Tony Harris**



## OSA President 2010/2011

Kay Powell, the current OSA President, graduated from Aber in Pure Mathematics and went on to take a Masters in City and Regional Planning at Cardiff University. She has pursued a career in planning and administration, including a variety of posts in local government and eight years as Chief Planner at the Welsh Assembly Government, and is now an independent consultant. A second generation Aberite and member of the OSA since she graduated in 1969, she has returned to Aber regularly for OSA Reunions and events, and also meets up annually with friends from her year at different venues.



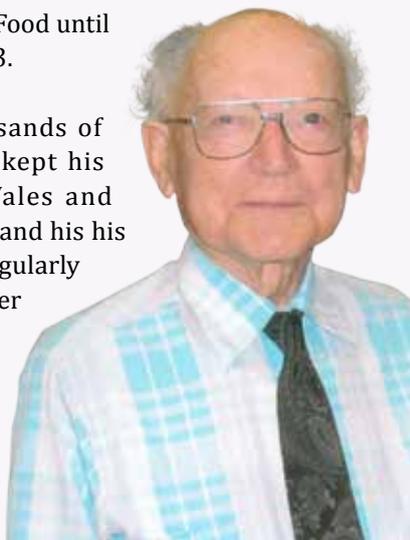
Her theme is continuity and change as she intends to keep the key elements of the annual OSA programme but develop closer links between the OSA and the University, and to the wider alumni network. She says "It was a particular pleasure to attend graduation ceremonies as a representative of former students in July and to meet some of the new graduates". She also enjoyed the first "Bar Kicks Back" reunion in August.

## Prestigious Honour for Aber Alumnus

Dr Stan Hughes, a Welsh-Canadian, one of the National Botanic Garden of Wales' founder members, one of the world's most eminent mycologists and an Aber alumnus, has been made a Member of the Order of Canada, the highest civilian honour given to Canadians for lifetime achievements.

Dr Hughes, now in his nineties, was born in Llanelli, graduated from Aberystwyth, became a specialist in the taxonomy of microscopic fungi, but emigrated to follow his career as a mycologist in Canada, where he worked at the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food until his retirement in 1983.

Despite living thousands of miles away, he has kept his connection with Wales and Aberystwyth, and he and his wife, Lyndell, have regularly attended the OSA Easter Reunion.



## OSA Life Membership Form

Please enrol me as a Life Member. I enclose a subscription of £20.

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Other .....

Surname .....

Other Names .....

(Former Name) .....

Permanent Address .....

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Post Code .....

Email .....

University Years – From .....

To.....

Department .....

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Signature.....

Date .....

Please: use capital letters throughout, and include your full names.

Make your cheque payable to: The Old Students' Association, and send to: The Treasurer, OSA, 9 Laura Place, Aberystwyth, SY23 2AX.

# Obituaries

It is with great sadness that we record the loss of graduates and members of staff, past and current. Three towering figures who were Fellows of Aberystwyth University are commemorated individually on these pages, and the names of those graduates of whose passing we have been informed since the last issue of PROM are listed below, with further details on the alumni website - [www.aber.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.aber.ac.uk/alumni)



## Patrick Hannan

The death of Patrick Hannan in October 2009 at the age of 68 robbed Wales of its leading political analyst on the airwaves. His deep knowledge of the nation's political, industrial and social history gained over forty years stemmed from his brilliant journalism on the front line during the demise of the coal and steel industries while simultaneously covering the politics of Wales in Westminster and the swings and roundabouts of the devolution debate.

A regular columnist of PROM, Patrick graduated in History at an exciting time in Aber at the turn of the sixties. Gwyn 'Alf' Williams was teaching Welsh History and the eccentric Richard Cobb was expounding on the French Revolution, both to packed lecture halls. Pat's editorship of the *Courier* gave him his first real taste of journalism while his gift for public speaking ensured him full houses in the Debates Union where he became a master of double entendre. Those three elements provided a unique grounding for his future career.

The move into professional journalism was delayed by an irate Editor of the *Western Mail* who interviewed Patrick with a *Courier* article in front of him. The article was an attack on the standards of the *Western Mail*! He was forced to start his proper career in Luton before moving to the *Western Mail* under a different editor. From there to BBC Wales and thirteen years as Political and Industrial Correspondent before becoming, firstly, a documentary TV producer and finally producer/presenter of thought provoking radio and TV programmes on Radio Wales, Radio 4, HTV Wales and BBC Wales TV. His distinctive voice loomed particularly large at election times, his encyclopaedic

knowledge giving him total authority while earning the respect of politicians, contributors and audience alike.

Some people thought of Patrick as a cynic. He was in fact a sceptic, taking nothing for granted, even from his friends. He was able to use sardonic humour to devastating effect when discussing the many ridiculous situations found in political life and revelled in their inconsistencies. These were much in evidence on his highly successful radio series *Tea Junction* and *Call to Order* which combined incisive interviewing with heavy irony.

His books are an important testimony to his contrarian thinking. *The Welsh Illusion* and *A Useful Fiction*, the latter a heavy broadside against the concept of Britishness in today's democracy, are titles giving a taste of his continuous questioning of conventional wisdoms. Written with style and wit, both are required reading for a knowledge of contemporary Welsh and British history. Patrick's book on the 1984 miners' strike, *When Arthur met Maggie*, is the only detailed account of mining's last stand written by its closest observer.

Patrick was armed with a phenomenal memory for people, dates and events. It was that worldly knowledge which helped him and his team-mate Peter Stead win Radio 4's *Round Britain Quiz* for Wales for the fifth time in ten years just a week before his death.

He leaves his wife, Menna Richards, the Director of BBC Wales, also a graduate and Fellow of Aberystwyth University.

**Gareth Price**

## Sincere condolences to the family and friends of:

**Alexander**, Professor Christopher, (Zoology), Died June 2009,

**Ap Gwent**, Mr Rhys Llywelyn, Died May 2010,

**Austin**, Dr Alan P, (Botany 1953), Died September 2009,

**Bamonte**, Ms Lucy Victoria, (Spanish 1997), Date Unknown,

**Barrett**, Dr William, (Geology 1960), Died November 2009,

**Bassett**, Dr Douglas Anthony,

(Geology 1948), Died November 2009,

**Brain**, Mr Alun Lloyd, (Physics 1997), Died February 2010,

**Brown**, Mr Peter James, (Law 1961), Date Unknown,

**Clark**, Mrs Megan Llewellyn, née Jones, Died April 2010,

**Clarke**, Miss Rebecca, (Law 2005), Died July 2009,

**Collier**, Mr Tom D, (Agriculture

1958), Date Unknown,

**Collier**, Mrs Heloise Eve, née Leleux, (Geography 1969), Died March 2009,

**Corles**, Ms Gaynor, née Jones, (History 1966), Died July 2010,

**Craven**, Mr Timothy John David, (Political Hist 2000), Died March 2010,

**Davies**, Mrs Rose, née Fullard, (English & French 1940), Died

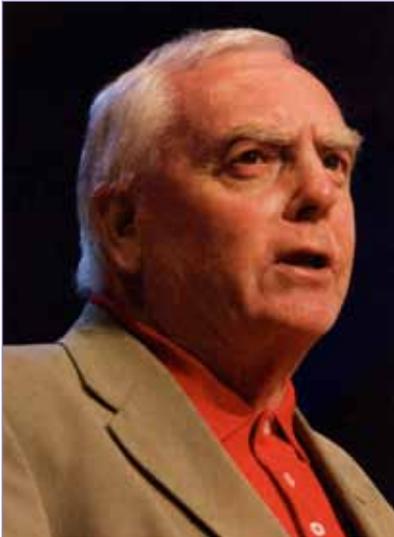
December 2009,

**Davies**, Dr Rhys Glyn, (Geology & Chemistry 1944), Died May 2010,  
**de St Dalmas**, Mr Anthony, Died June 2010,

**Dempsey**, Mr Muiris Fergal, (Scriptwriting 2007), Died January 2010,

**Dovey**, Mr William, (Geography 1975), Died April 2009,

**Dyson**, Mrs Olga, Died October 2009,



## Hywel Teifi Edwards

The male youth sub-culture of the seafarers at Aberaeron County School in the early fifties, at least as I saw it, was macho, pugnacious, highly audible, satirical and witty, giving prestige above all else to the feats of the playing fields. The product of an earlier generation's seafaring experiences

maybe. And within this group, Hywel Teifi, self-confessed specialist in the sliding tackle, seemed absolutely comfortable, among the most prominent and popular.

After losing sight of him for a few years, I encountered him next when he was a postgraduate student at Aber, still among the heroes of the football team, highly audible in the bar, but now also loquacious about the object of his research essay, the critic and poet Creuddynfab, Ceiriog's poetic mentor, and the first paid secretary of the National Eisteddfod.

His research work on Creuddynfab gained him an MA in 1961, thus launching his career as an incomparable and pioneering interpreter of Welsh life and culture in the Victorian era. The articles and reviews began to flow. Then came the volumes, starting with his study of the National Eisteddfod, *Gŵyl Gwallia* (1980). Permeating his work, along with hundreds of popular lectures, was his thesis that the Treachery of the Blue Books had inflicted such a psychological wound upon the Welsh as to make their subsequent yearning to restore the nation's respect in the eyes of the English distort the nation's cultural and political direction for the rest of the 19th century, if not indeed until today.

An associated weakness was the failure of Welsh-language literature to give voice to the experience of the mining and industrial communities. His interpretation of this failure is set out in his book *Arwr Glew Erwau'r Glo* (1994). By initiating and editing the seven hefty volumes of *Cyfres y Cymoedd* (The Valleys Series 1993-2003) he endeavoured to put the record straight.

Hywel Teifi was a passionate Welsh nationalist. So while generating his remarkable academic and popular output, he threw himself, reluctantly it may be, but nevertheless with great success, into politics, representing his adopted village, Llangennech, on Dyfed County Council and standing for Plaid Cymru in the 1983 parliamentary election. He was a conscientious and committed campaigner and his influence on the policy direction and decision-making in Dyfed was substantial.

It was to the 'blessed village' (*pentref gwyn*) of his boyhood that Hywel's remains returned for burial on 20 January of this year. Many times we had heard him wax lyrical about his glorious upbringing in that village. Lest he be accused of sentimentality though, the reader might ponder on his comments in the preface to his volume, *O'r Pentre Gwyn i Gwmderi* (2004) which analyses and debunks the myth of the ideal country village disseminated by Owen M Edwards and others. He says, "I know as well as anyone how deeply rooted such a place can be in our need's earth", and then, after sketching half a century's transformation, "I dote upon my 'blessed village', but my dotage is not such as to believe that it could be to me a continuing city". The reference is of course scriptural.

In addition to the above, Hywel was a schoolteacher, a lecturer in the extra-mural department and then Professor of Welsh at University College Swansea. He was a Fellow of Aberystwyth University.

### *Cynog Dafis*

**Evans**, Mr W E, (Geology), Date Unknown,  
**Evans**, Mr John, Date Unknown,  
**Evans**, Miss Ronwen, (Geography 1944), Died February 2010,  
**Evans**, Dr Roberta, née Williams, (Marine Biology 1940), Died February 2010,  
**Evans**, Mr Eben, (1941), Died July 2009,  
**Evans**, Mrs Carys Hall, née Williams, (1977), Died June 2009,  
**Garlick**, Mrs Ann Lorraine, née Jones, (English 1962), Died December 2009,

**Gears**, Mr Anthony, (Drama & American Studies 1980), Died June 2010,  
**George**, Mr Geraint David, (Env Science 1981), Died March 2010,  
**George**, Miss Yvonne Suzanne, (French 1945), Died March 2010,  
**George**, Miss Denise Mary Jane, (English, French & German 1945), Died May 2010,  
**Gethin**, Dr Ronald Geoffrey, (Zoology 1964), Died November 2009,  
**Giardelli**, Mr , Died November 2009,

**Griffiths**, Mr Islwyn, Date Unknown,  
**Griffiths**, Dr David J, (Agric Botany 1936), Died January 2010,  
**Hardman**, Ms Laura Siobhan, (Drama 1993), Died June 2009,  
**Hill**, Mr Adrian Kenneth, (Economics 1986), Date Unknown,  
**Horrell**, Mr Norman James, (Geology 1949), Died July 2010,  
**Hughes**, Miss Einir Wyn, (Education 2007), Date Unknown,  
**Inomata**, Mr Osamu, (Business Admin 2004), Date Unknown,  
**Jenkins**, Dr John Geraint, (Geography & Anthropology

1952), Died August 2009,  
**Jenkins**, Mr D H, Date Unknown,  
**Jenkins**, Dr Kathryn, (Welsh 1982), Died May 2009,  
**Johnes**, Dr Myrddin Hugh, (French 1940), Died April 2010,  
**Jones**, Mr John Emrys, (Agriculture), Died April 2010,  
**Jones**, Ms Catrin Prys, (Drama 1997), Date Unknown,  
**Jones**, Mr Robert L, (Education 1958), Died June 2009,  
**Jones**, Mr David Glyn Boyt, (Geology 1960), Died March 2010,



## Richard Livsey, Baron Livsey of Talgarth

Lord Livsey of Talgarth, a former leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, died peacefully at home at Llanfihangel Talyllyn on 15 September 2010 aged 75. A fellow of Aberystwyth University since 2007, he had a passion for Welsh devolution and was a champion for rural communities. Regarded with much respect and great affection by all who knew him, he was a courteous and mild mannered man, lacking any pretension, but with an unwavering determination when pursuing issues about which he felt strongly.

Richard Arthur Lloyd Livsey was born and bred in Talgarth, Breconshire. He attended Bedales School in Hampshire before going on to Seale-Hayne Agricultural College in Devon, where he studied for a National Diploma in Agriculture, and Reading University, where he gained an MSc in agricultural management. In 1961 he joined ICI and moved to Galloway in Scotland to work for a year as an Assistant Farm Manager on one of the company's farms; this was when he met Rene, his future wife. He was then transferred to Northumberland where he worked as ICI's agricultural development officer for the next five years. When Richard left ICI, it was to return to Scotland to become Farm Manager of the Blair Drummond Estate in Perthshire. It was during this time, in 1970, that he fought his first election as a Liberal candidate, contesting the safe Conservative seat of Perth and East Perthshire, coming fourth and losing his deposit.

In 1971, Richard returned to Wales and joined the newly established Welsh Agricultural College at Aberystwyth under the leadership of Dr David Morris. He held his post as senior lecturer in farm management at the College for the next 14

years and, with Rene, also farmed a 60 acre small holding at Llanon.

Despite lack of success in Scotland, Richard's political ambitions remained undiminished and, in 1983, he fought his home seat of Brecon and Radnor on a Liberal-SDP Alliance ticket. While unsuccessful on that occasion, two years later he won the by-election in the constituency with a majority of 559 over Labour. He retained his seat at the 1987 General Election, but with an even slimmer majority, determined after several recounts, of 56 votes, on this occasion over the Conservatives. He joined Parliament's Select Committee on Agriculture, as well as that on Welsh Affairs, but lost his seat at the General Election in 1992 by just 130 votes. He then joined ATB-Landbase Cymru as its Deputy Director, but his main concern was to recapture Brecon and Radnor, which he did in 1997 with a majority of 5,000. On his return to Parliament he was appointed the Liberal Democrat's Shadow Secretary of State for Wales and was heavily involved in the Devolution Settlement for Wales until he stood down in 2001, then becoming a member of the House of Lords. In the Upper House he was made a member of the European Environment and Rural Affairs Committee and became President of the EU Movement in Wales.

In recent years Richard found more time to devote to some of his other interests, including music and sport. Apart from being Vice-President of the Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival and Chairman of the Brecon Jazz Festival, he was a member of several male voice choirs, a keen fly-fisherman and a cyclist and a strong supporter of Welsh rugby and cricket.

Richard is survived by Rene, their two sons and one daughter.

***Dr John Harries, Pro Vice-Chancellor***

**Kidson**, Emeritus Prof Clarence, (1993), Died March 2010,  
**Lacey**, Mr Derek Stuart, (Econ & Law 1985), Died in RAF Tornado accident June 1998,  
**Le Fevre**, Ms Sharon Jane, née Appleyard, (Drama 1996), Date Unknown,  
**Llewellyn**, Mr John David, Date Unknown,  
**Lloyd**, Mr Wynne, Died April 2010,  
**Lloyd**, Mr Dewi Maelor, (Welsh 1951), Died May 2009,  
**Llwyd**, Mr Iwan Lloyd, née Williams, (Welsh 1979), Died May 2010,

**Manning**, Mrs Marion, née Davies, (Music 1948), Died December 2009,  
**Morgan**, Dr John Gwynfryn, (Latin 1955), Died April 2010,  
**Morris**, Mr Hywel Ap Sion, (1948), Died May 2010,  
**Moseley**, Mr Norman, Died November 2009,  
**Nash**, Mr Christopher James, (English 1959), Died October 2009,  
**Neville Havins**, Mr Peter Joseph, (English 2007), Date Unknown,  
**O'Brien**, Mrs Marion C M, née Lloyd, (Geography 1945), Died May 2009,

**Osborne**, Mr Graham William, (Aquatic Biology 1987), Date Unknown,  
**Parker**, Mr Ian Brian, (1979), Died September 2009,  
**Pritchard-Jones**, Mrs Marianne, née Borley, (English & Economics 1948), Died May 2010,  
**Prosser**, Mr Richard Llewellyn, (Law 1968), Died September 2009,  
**Roberts**, Mrs Megan Irene Lloyd, née Morris, (Geography 1945), Died April 2010,  
**Roberts**, Mr Huw R, (Chemistry & Geology 1942), Died June 2010,  
**Roberts**, Mrs Gillian, née Rees,

(French & Italian 1972), Died October 2009,  
**Roe**, Mr Gordon Felix, (History 2001), Date Unknown,  
**Samuel**, Mr Iestyn Gareth, (Business Admin 1989), Date Unknown,  
**Sayers**, Mrs Lesley Anne, née Davis, (Classical Studies and Drama 1979), Died August 2010,  
**Scott**, Mr Richard Samuel Lawford, (Geography 1951), Date Unknown,  
**Shafi**, Tan Sri Datuk Muhammad Ghaza, (1952), Died January 2010,  
**Shepherd**, Mr Keith, (1962), Died October 2009,

## Commemorating staff

We remember the following who were current or former members of University staff.

**Dr E Les Breese**, a graduate in Agricultural Botany, who had been Deputy Director of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, died in March 2010.

**Dr Tudor E Jenkins**, MA, DPhil (Oxon), FInstP, Reader in Physics at the Institute of Mathematics and Physics died in December 2009, aged 60. Originally from the Rhondda Fawr, Dr Jenkins read Physics at Corpus Christi College Oxford and obtained his DPhil at the Clarendon Laboratory, Oxford. He joined the Department of Physics at Aberystwyth in 1983, becoming Senior Lecturer in 1990 and Reader in 2007.

**Dr Mustak Ali Kaderbhai**, was a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences. He joined Aberystwyth as a lecturer in Biochemistry and Agricultural Biochemistry in 1984 and died in January 2010.

**Professor Hugh King**, MA, PhD, FRSC, FIBiol, Professor of Biochemistry and Agricultural Biochemistry at Aberystwyth from 1966 until 1982, and a member of Senate, Council and Court, died in March 2009.

In February 2010 **Mr Iolo Lewis**, a former Lecturer in Religious Education in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, died. Prior to his appointment at Aberystwyth, Mr Lewis, a graduate of University of Wales, Bangor and Cambridge University, had been a teacher at Langley Grammar School, Slough, and at Ysgol Llanhari.

**Dr Cecil Monk**, a Reader at the Department of Chemistry who joined the University in 1944 and stayed here until his retirement in 1980, died aged 95.

**Mrs Margaret 'Mags' Morgan**, who died in January 2010, will be remembered fondly by generations of Physics students for her invaluable service providing tea and biscuits.

**Mr William "Bill" Prime** who died aged 63 was a valued member of the Grounds Maintenance Team since 2000. He was a well known character throughout the University and will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

**Professor Hubert Rees FRS**, a graduate and former Professor of Agricultural Botany and Vice Principal of Aberystwyth University, died in September 2009.

**Dr Aileen Roberta Smith**, Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences died in December 2009 aged 56. A graduate of Glasgow University, Dr Smith gained an MSc at the University of Natal in 1978 and a PhD at Birmingham University in 1980 before joining Aberystwyth in 1980. She became a Senior Lecturer in 1994.

**Sims**, Mr Enos, Date Unknown,  
**Skeggs**, Mr Malcolm Eric Leslie, (History 1962), Died June 2010,  
**Stocking**, Mr John, (Physics 1951), Died August 2010,  
**Strangemore**, Mr Norman 'Raggy', (Geography 1962), Died February 2010,  
**Suff**, Mrs Marnah Mai, née Jones, (Law 1954), Died April 2009,  
**Sunderland**, Professor Eric, (Geography & Anthropology 1950), Died March 2010,  
**Taylor**, Mr Adam Clifford, (Geography 2003), Died October 2009,

**Thomas**, Dr David Eric, (1950), Died August 2010,  
**Thomas**, Mr Peter, Died January 2010,  
**Thomas**, Mrs Nonna G, Died July 2010,  
**Thomas**, Mr Hywel Gruffydd Edwards, (Law), Died March 2009,  
**Thomas**, Mr Einnydd, (Agriculture 1949), Died May 2009,  
**Thomas**, Mrs Mair, née Owen, (French 1963), Died May 2009,  
**Thomas**, Dr William James Orville, (Chemistry), Died November 2009,  
**Walker**, Mr Alan Lawrence Nicholas, (Library Studies DL 2006), Died 2010,

**Walker**, Mr John Richard, (Geography 1997), Died June 2010,  
**Wardle**, Mrs Mary, née Allen, (1945), Died August 2010,  
**Warrick**, Mr Robert, (Economics 1970), Died May 2010,  
**Wigmore**, Mr Paul Michael, (Welsh 2009), Date Unknown,  
**Wilcox**, Mr Haydn Joseph, (Botany & Geography 1951), Died August 2010,  
**Williams**, Mr Roger A, (1951), Died 2010,  
**Williams**, Ms Jean Eillena, née Jones, (1999), Date Unknown,

**Williams**, Ms Sian Rhys, Died March 2010,  
**Williams**, Mr Alfred Glyn, (1993), Died November 2009,  
**Williams**, Mr Mervyn, (1960), Died October 2009,  
**Williams**, Mrs Dina, Died September 2009,  
**Williams**, Mr Gerwyn, (1953), Died September 2009,  
**Windsor**, Ms Kay Frances, (1985), Died December 2009,

# A Powys Perspective

Betsan Powys

“Write me three sentences on...” I forget what it was that Dad wanted my brother and me to write three sentences about, but it is seared on my mind, three decades and more later, that he asked for three sentences. Not four, nor two but three. I was probably trying to please Dad, or compete with my brother, or I thought that I had an awful lot of interesting things to say so I wrote four sentences and gave them to Dad to mark.

“What do you mean, 0 out of 10?”

“I asked for three sentences. That’s not what you’ve given me. This does not meet the demand”.

Now before you start feeling any sympathy – or consider sending my father a rebuke for being so hard on his child – consider this: I still remember the lesson. “Tough but fair” as politicians in a corner say.

So what has brought this particular anecdote to mind now?

Because there is another task on its way, one in which a mark of 0 out of 10 would be a disaster. The task? To explain, usually

in no more than a few short sentences, the significance of the referendum on greater powers for the Welsh Assembly. If those sentences are not accurate, coherent, unbiased and do not make a good impression on those listening, then it will be 0 out of 10.

So what’s the problem?

Well, you give it a try. Try to form three sentences explaining the significance of a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’ vote on the way that Wales would be governed in future. Easy? Hardly. I don’t doubt that the President of this University could have a good stab at it ... but the rest of us? Quite an achievement.

That word ‘greater’ to start with. Would a ‘yes’ vote give ‘greater’ powers to the Assembly? Well yes ... but ... um ... Cardiff Bay politicians already have some legislative powers, and a ‘yes’ vote would not give them any powers beyond those that are already in the Act, nor in more fields than those already devolved. And then what about that word ‘Assembly’? How many times have you heard people using the word ‘Assembly’ when they are referring in fact to the Assembly Government? And yes, I am talking about political journalists who should know better, and press officers, not to mention some Cardiff Bay politicians.

Does it matter? Of course it matters. Not that everybody agrees, mind you.

Why, asked one, are you making such a fuss about a word or two here or there? Why pick on the use of a single word when the majority of people listening have no idea what the difference is between the Assembly and the Assembly Government? Come down from that ivory tower for goodness’ sake. What did he say in his email? “I’m like Joe Public, and most of us think that the terms ‘Welsh

Government’ and ‘National Assembly for Wales’ are shorthand for the same thing... and bearing that in mind, I don’t think that most people give a flying fig if I use the wrong term.”

Meow mate. Well I do.

Did it matter that the first attempt by the Welsh Office and its advisers to form the question on the referendum paper was not accurate and coherent? Of course it mattered. But hey, it’s a complex, technical issue. People will be voting on principle, anyway, won’t they?

Well, that’s as may be but that’s exactly why it is essential that people like me pass the test of explaining what exactly is in the balance. Surely you need to nail the requirements of the question before you can answer it properly? Dad’s lesson.

How much discussion will there be over the coming months on the principle, and the specific ways that the legislative system in Wales would change if there were to be a ‘yes’ vote?

One place that is sure to see fierce debate? The blogosphere, including my own blog, *Betsan’s Blog* on the BBC website. If you sometimes call by and read, not venturing to leave a comment or join the debate that can be a bit fiery and aggressive at times, consider again. We are introducing a system of checking comments and moderating that will, I hope, ensure that everybody is free to express an opinion without being shot down, and that valuable discussion can flow, rather than be stifled.

In three sentences – more or less – you are welcome. ■

***Betsan Powys graduated from Aber in German and Drama in 1987, and is Political Editor of BBC Wales***



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# The Bar Kicks Back 2011

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- Listen • Marvel • Meet • Play •
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The Bar Kicks Back 2011 takes place on the weekend of **2nd-4th September**. All alumni of the University are invited to come back and enjoy the wide range of activities on offer from kicking the bar to hugging a tree, erudite lectures to some gentle exercise, or a quiet drink to a twmpath. Special events for those who graduated in 2001, 1986, or before 1961.



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