

THE SUSS-EX CLUB

NEWSLETTER No. 18, February 2011

WELCOME

—to the first Suss-Ex Newsletter of 2011. A number of successful activities have been held over the last few months, and more are planned—see below. You can find this Newsletter and all past issues, as well as details of the Steering Group and other documents, on our website at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/suss-ex/> .

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St. Paul's Cathedral tour and Bach's St John Passion, 19th April

Some members will remember Roger Walkinton, our extremely helpful Alumni Office contact in Suss-Ex's early days—and the man who proposed our apt title! He left Sussex to work for St Paul's Cathedral, but has continued as a member and friend of Suss-Ex. He has, therefore, offered us the possibility of a very interesting architectural and musical visit to St Paul's, on Tuesday April 19th.

We will start with a private guided tour of the less-seen upper Triforium galleries, including Wren's Library, his Great Model and the Geometric Staircase, as well as the fabulous "BBC View" right the way along the length of the Cathedral. (For the less able-bodied, there is a lift up to the Triforium and plenty of seats along the way!) In the Library we shall be met by the Librarian, Joseph Wisdom. This will be followed by a Cathedral and Crypt tour, prior to taking reserved seats under the Dome for a performance of Bach's St John Passion, directed by Andrew Carwood, in which the Cathedral Choir will be joined by the London Mozart Players, with soloists drawn from the choir. Between the tour and the performance there will be time to buy tea and have a comfort break. The timetable will be:

3.30 Assemble at the Chapter House. Brief introductory film in the Crypt Oculus (unless rehearsal above makes that problematic).

3.45 Triforium tour

4.30 Cathedral and Crypt tour

5.15 Tea break (maybe in Crypt, maybe choice of tea/coffee shops nearby)

6.00 Claim seats ready for St John Passion

6.30 Performance starts

c. 8.15 Performance ends

Detailed instructions about where to meet, and convenient ways of getting there, will be circulated near the time to those coming.

We pay for all this by making a composite donation to the "St Paul's Cathedral Foundation" of £15 per head. (Roger would like to mention that the Cathedral gets almost no help from Government or Church Commissioners, and that anyone coming to a service gets in free—and this is a little less than the usual charge for a guided tour.)

Visit to St Paul's Cathedral, Tuesday 19th April

If you would like to come, please complete this form and send it with your cheque to Jennifer Platt [Freeman Centre on campus, or 98 Beaconsfield Villas, Brighton BN1 6HE], to reach her by the end of February. There is a limit to the number that can be accommodated, so book promptly to ensure your place.

Name:

Address (e-mail if possible):

.....

Number of tickets wanted:

Please remember to enclose your cheque for £15 each, made out to J. Goldie.

Sir Harry Kroto: Friday 17th June

A date for your diary: on Friday 17th June we will have a talk by Sussex's own Sir Harry Kroto FRS, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry 1996. We will meet for a drink beforehand, and the talk will be followed, optionally, by an evening meal. Full details and a booking form will be circulated nearer the time. Meanwhile, make a note!

Obituaries

A list of obituaries of former members of staff is on our website at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/suss-ex/Obituaries.html>.

John Bowden, who taught at Sussex in the late '60s, died on 6th December 2010. Obituaries appeared in the *Telegraph* of 29th December and in the *Guardian* of 18th January.

James Shiel: we published an obituary by Norman Vance in [Newsletter 16](#). Gerard O'Daly, Emeritus Professor of Latin at UCL, adds the following contribution.

Dear Professor Vance,

I greatly appreciated your piece on the late Dr James Shiel, which I read on the University of Sussex website. You captured nicely his character and erudition. He was one of my teachers at University College Dublin in the early 1960s, just before he left for Sussex. I learnt a lot from him, especially in his seminars on Greek philosophy, where he had a small group of us poring over fragments of the Presocratics. He was a genuine practitioner of teaching that allows the learner to learn for himself, and he was also enormously encouraging to undergraduates. I myself, in a career in Classics that eventually brought me to UCL, went on to work in what became commonly

known as “late antiquity”, in no small part due to him, and researched and published on Greek Neoplatonism, and above all on Augustine, Boethius (!), and Latin Christian literature generally. I met Dr Shiel a few times subsequently, but lost touch after a period abroad in the 1980s. I now regret that during my time in London I never picked up the threads. My gratitude to him has, however, remained undiminished. Your notice gave me the news of his death, but also brought consolation, as it suggested that his life was not merely long, but was also rewarding. Every good wish,
Gerard O'Daly

Robert Whittle: we published an obituary by Mike Tribe in [Newsletter 17](#). The following obituary (here with small additions by the author) first appeared in the *Churchill College Review* of December 2010, and is reproduced by kind permission.

JAMES ROBERT STUART WHITTLE

Tony Leigh-Smith (a college and lifelong friend) writes including material from Robert's colleagues and his son Raphael:

Dr Robert (Bob) Whittle, a founding undergraduate of Churchill College Cambridge, senior lecturer at Sussex University, prominent development geneticist and all-round renaissance man, died following a brain haemorrhage on 23rd August 2010.

Coming up to Churchill in 1961 from Lewes County Grammar School, Robert went on to complete his PhD in Cambridge alongside Michael Ashburner FRS, a colleague and friend. During this time he married Frances with whom he had two children, Raphael and Anastasia, and all three feel his loss deeply.

In 1968 he moved to the Developmental Genetics Group in the School of Biological Sciences at Sussex where he remained throughout his academic career, retiring in 2004. At Sussex he pursued his interest in identifying developmental genes through phenotypic analysis using the model organism *Drosophila*, better known as the fruit fly.

Robert continued to publish and lecture internationally and latterly the importance of his work has become widely recognised. His many students found him an inspiring and giving supervisor and teacher. Messages have been received from a number of *Drosophila* geneticists from around the world reflecting the affection and respect they had for Robert.

Professor Philip Ingham FRS, a doctoral student of Robert's, recalls his former supervisor's early pre-occupation with the genetic control of wing patterning in the fly: “In the late 1970s Robert isolated and studied two mutant genes that caused spectacular duplications of the wing and I think he realised the similarities between these phenotypes and the duplications of the vertebrate limb observed in manipulated chick embryos. Ten years later, with Robert's help, we cloned one of these genes, named Patched, and subsequently showed that, interestingly, it is also present in vertebrates where it controls the development of the limbs. The other gene that Robert discovered, Costal2, remained more enigmatic. However, just last year, twenty-five years after he found it in flies, three groups in the USA showed that it is another key component in the pathway controlling limb development, this time in the mouse!”

Always experimenting on the borderline between art and science, Robert's interests encompassed a wide range of cultural and intellectual exploration and collaboration. He published creative writing and poetry and had mastered Spanish to a level such that he was reading *El Pais* more than the *Guardian*! In recent times he presented a weekly radio show on Coastway Radio in Brighton that allowed him to combine his eclectic musical loves with stimulating ideas and conversation.

A painter and artist in a distinctive style he poked fun at the art scene in his adopted home town of Brighton by organising Closed Flat exhibitions during annual Open House art festivals. Well travelled across Europe, Africa, South America and Cuba, he made and visited friends in many countries. However, he was always a Sussex person at heart who, along with family, friends and partner Agnès, loved the coast and the South Downs, as well as enjoying a rich cultural and social life in Brighton.

Those of us fortunate enough to be numbered amongst Robert's friends feel great sadness at his passing but celebrate a life well lived.

Research contributions by retired staff: 2010

Our policy of recording each year the research contributions made by retired staff continues. Quite a few Suss-Ex members are, while notionally retired, still active in research, for which some access to university facilities is often required. Our contributions to the university's research output will continue to be of value under the REF, but we find that the extent to which, and the manner in which, our needs are met can vary from one part of the university to another, and sometimes as a minority group we may simply get forgotten. It is, therefore, advantageous to those of us who continue to produce, and wish to maintain our relationship with the research life of the university, for our contributions to be noted.

If, therefore, you have in 2010 taken part in any of the activities listed below, or related ones, please send a list in, with your subject group affiliation:

- academic publications [already appeared],
- conference papers given, invited talks,
- prizes and honours received,
- new grants gained,
- research students completing,
- officerships in learned societies,
- external examinerships

—even if notification of them has already appeared in the Bulletin.

This should if possible be done by e mail, and sent to j.platt@sussex.ac.uk; all those received will be included in a consolidated list in the next newsletter.