Welcome to our new look Suss-Ex Club Newsletter!

This is our 56th Newsletter since Suss-Ex Club was launched back in 2006. A lot has happened since then including the massive use of social media and other online platforms to link up and communicate. In that spirit, Suss-Ex launched a Facebook group, which is now just over 12 months old. New memberships are coming through in healthy numbers, we have shared some photos of past events, and have reconnected with ex-colleagues.

Suss-Ex also launched some online Zoom talks which proved very popular and meant that we could link up with members from far afield - it was great to hear genuine cries of delight as members recognised someone from their time at Sussex on the Zoom gallery view.

In the light of these recent developments, the steering group undertook a review of the Newsletter, the result of which you will see in this new look 56th edition. In particular we are featuring a new item - Spotlight on... - where we share the post-Sussex adventures of ex-Sussex staff. This issue features Janet Aspley, whom many of you may remember as the University’s Staff Development Advisor. See what Janet has been getting up to since leaving Sussex – we hope you find it inspirational!

Also, are there any colleagues you knew at Sussex whom you have lost touch with? Why not send us a short description of where and when you worked with them, including names, and we will put that in our Where are they now? feature. You never know, someone may be able to re-connect you...

This Newsletter includes our next event (Ridgeway Vineyard visit), which was postponed due to Covid. Watch out for updates on future events planned for the summer when lockdown restrictions will hopefully have been lifted.

And to finish, no Newsletter is complete without its members and their contributions. If you have stories, or ideas, please email them to us (contact details in our Newsletter footer) or post them to our FB page.

Suss-Ex Club Steering Group

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OUR NEXT EVENT
Ridgeview Vineyard and Winery visit - Friday 23rd July

We are very pleased to announce a return visit to the Ridgeview Wine Estate, Ditchling, on Friday 23rd July 2021 (we first went there in 2014 on a visit organised by Sue Bullock and had a very enjoyable time).

The tour of the vineyard will start at 12.30pm after which we will be shown how their high-class wines are produced. This will conclude with a wine tasting session.

The tour will last for about an hour and a half. There will be an opportunity to obtain a light lunch afterwards in their new café (optional). The cost of the tour and wine tasting is £20 per person. The lunch will be extra.

As the number of people on the tour is limited to just 20, tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis. For further details, menu options and the booking form, you can download further details, the menu options, and the booking form as a Word document for you to type into or a PDF to print out and write on.

Save the Date – Summer picnic!

After last year’s successful summer picnic on campus, we are planning a repeat event on Thursday 26th August 2 – 5pm. The blackberries should be aplenty at this time of year— we certainly picked quite an abundance last year!

Further details to follow, including details about other events that were put on hold due to Covid restrictions.

Spotlight on... Janet Aspley!

We are really pleased to be launching our new Newsletter feature where we share the journey of a Suss-Ex member post University of Sussex – we kickstart this brand new feature with the unique and inspiring story of Janet Aspley.

From Lewes to Tennessee, and back

For those who came into contact with Janet Aspley in her role as Staff Development Advisor (2003 – 2014), probably the last thing that might have come to mind was rhinestones and tassels. But these were very much part of Janet’s life after leaving Sussex!

Before our imaginations run wild, Janet had in fact transformed her life-long passion for textiles and sewing into a study of Dress History, adding her love of country music to gain a PhD entitled ‘Hillbilly Deluxe: Male Performance Dress and Authenticity In Country Music 1947 – 1991’. But what did Janet do before the dazzling lights of Tennessee beckoned?

Janet began her career as a Textile Purchasing Officer (hmmm…. is a pattern emerging?) in the Civil Service, moving after a couple of years into staff development.

After a period of freelance work, she joined the small Staff Development team at a time of significant growth and organisational change at Sussex. Janet was key in introducing new training programmes to meet new needs and roles. The popular Women’s Action Learning Sets that Janet developed continue to run at Sussex, alongside various management programmes that she initiated.

In parallel with the day job, Janet continued to nurture her creativity – she designed and sewed for herself and her young family, alongside contributing articles to Country Music People magazine which took her to Nashville (Tennessee). It was here where, rubbing shoulders with the showbiz giants of country music, she was inspired by the sparkling, embroidered men’s outfits known as ‘Nudie suits’ that are so much a part of this musical tradition.

It was getting an AHRC PhD fellowship that enabled Janet to leave her job at Sussex in 2014 to do a PhD.

Despite doing a History degree at Cambridge, undertaking a PhD was a leap of faith. Janet eagerly acknowledges the encouragement and guidance that was generously given by colleagues at Sussex - Liz James (Professor of History of Art), and Clive Webb (Professor of American History). Dr Janet Aspley graduated in February 2020 and has since taught at London College of Fashion and Brighton University.
Whilst studying, Janet acquired an original 1940s western shirt pattern. These have a specific design and look, so making these shirts takes a lot of skill. Janet gave one of her first creations to Grammy-winning singer songwriter Jim Lauderdale whilst interviewing him in London, and word of mouth did the rest! Since then, Janet has since successfully established her own brand, ‘Dandy & Rose’. She makes custom western shirts from original Liberty-print fabrics. Her creations have been worn around the world on stage, TV and in the movies, and were displayed in the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2017.

So what next for Janet?
Janet explains that her unique shirts rely heavily on live music performances, so sadly Covid has had its impact over the past year. In the meantime Janet can be found working very happily in a part-time role at Lewes Library. Janet has fond memories of Sussex and has drawn extensively on the skills she developed whilst working there - the academic environment and support she received from colleagues were invaluable to her.

Looking back at the threads of her journey from Lewes to Tennessee and back what, we asked her, would be the one piece of advice she would give herself? “There is no fitting problem that can’t be solved without a lurex shoelace!”

Well, we certainly hope to see more of what Janet does next – with or without lurex.

Janet’s journey and some of her creations, can be seen here: https://dandyandrose.com/
Interview and piece written by Rossana Dowsett and Sara Hinchliffe.

Have you gone on to do something interesting or perhaps you have achieved a life-long ambition after leaving Sussex? Or you know someone who has? We would love to know! Get in touch with the editors at: rossana.dowsett@ntlworld.com

The Honey Bee: the world’s most amazing animal!

More than 50 members of Suss-Ex joined a Zoom talk by Professor Francis Ratnieks, the UK’s first professor of apiculture, from the University of Sussex on 17 March.

This fascinating talk, packed with lots of interesting facts, covered the honey bee and its importance to humans, for pollination and for the production of honey. In Francis’ view the honey bee – numbering in the trillions and spreading over all continents except Antarctica – isn’t endangered. We also discussed some of the joys of beekeeping for pleasure and how gardeners can encourage bees (a good plant to sow to attract bees is English marjoram, which participants rushed to buy and plant!).

In short, we all came away armed with a better understanding of the honey bee and how to encourage the species into our gardens to thrive.

More information about Francis and the work of his lab – LASI (the Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects) can be found on the lab website: www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi.

OTHER EVENTS

Members may be interested in other upcoming University of Sussex events available to them. You can see a full list and register for them on the Development and Alumni Relations website: https://www.sussex.ac.uk/alumni/news-events/events

Suss-Ex Club Facebook Group – membership creeping up!

We are really pleased that the launch of our Facebook group last year is continuing to increase our membership as ex-Sussex employees gradually get to know about us. At the time of writing we currently have 114 members on the Facebook group page, who
come from all parts of the University. They include academic staff, administrative faculty, support and technical staff, and are a mixture of retirees, the part retired and those who have moved on to other jobs.

We rely on everyone who has joined the Facebook group to encourage even more ex-staff to join. It’s a quick and easy way of communicating with each other. Information about forthcoming events will always be posted on this page and usually ahead of members receiving the information by email. It’s also open to members themselves to post any memories or photos they may have that might be of interest to other members.

Recently several photos of past Suss-Ex Club events have been uploaded to the Facebook page, so if you’re new to Suss-Ex you can see the kind of thing we’ve arranged in the past.

However, you won’t be able to see any posts there until you’ve actually joined as it’s a private closed group and not viewable by the general public. If you haven’t tried our Facebook page yet, give it a go! Post your memories and tag colleagues so that we can share your highlights from Sussex:  

https://www.facebook.com/groups/2507222389510329

Who has been publishing?

We all know that an academic career is for life, even if you are no longer on the University’s payroll! Members will be interested to know about your recent publications, with links to further information. Also, we know that many former staff who had non-academic roles publish on a variety of subjects too and Suss-Ex members would like to hear about your output as well. Send details/links about your publications to Charles Goldie: C.M.Goldie@sussex.ac.uk

Friendship corner: where are they now?

This is a new feature where members can post enquiries about the whereabouts of former colleagues they have lost contact with but with whom they’d like to re-connect. Just send us information about you and the people you’d like to get back in touch with, including when and where you worked with them. You never know, someone in the Club may be able help...

Also, did you make a life-long friend at the University? Tell us about this – where did you meet, was it your mutual interest that pulled you together? A shared work experience? Anything at all! We look forward to hearing from you:

rossana.dowsett@ntlworld.com

A ‘thank you’ to Adrian

Adrian Peasgood, who has served on our Steering Group (committee) from its foundation in 2006 up to now, has retired from the Group. Adrian was a member of Library staff from the 1960s and at retirement was the University Librarian. He is a fan of the 'little theatres' - amateur theatre groups - of Brighton and Lewes, and initiated and organised several group visits to see their best productions. By contrast he also organised a memorable Suss-Ex tour of Veolia’s Waste Management Facility at Hollingdean in Brighton. For the last few years he has edited our Newsletter. At its June meeting the Steering Group recorded its heartfelt thanks to Adrian for his long and devoted service to Suss-Ex – we hope to continue seeing Adrian at our various events and outings.
OBITUARIES

The Suss-Ex Club always wishes to note the passing away of ex members of staff, and in particular their contribution to the University and its life. A full list of obituaries is on the Suss-Ex website. In this edition we note with regret those added to the list in 2021. Mostly these record the recent loss of an ex-colleague, while those from earlier years report a death not previously noted. Let us know if there is anyone we’ve missed.

**Peter Abbs**, Creative Writing, died December 2020, aged 78.  
*Sussex News and Events, The Guardian, The Times*

**Giovanni Carsaniga**, Italian Studies, died March 2016, aged 82.  
*Australasian Centre for Italian Studies, Sydney Morning Herald, Australian Academy of the Humanities*

*Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, The Guardian, The Independent*

**Sir Leslie Fielding**, Diplomat and former VC, died March 2021, aged 88.  
*Sussex News and Events, The Times, UACES*

*Sussex News and Events, The Guardian*

**David Harrison**, Sociology, died April 2021, aged 79.  
*Suss-Ex Club* (obituary commissioned for this Newsletter)

**Harold Hodson**, Medicinal Chemistry, died March 2021; aged 88.  
*Suss-Ex Club* (obituary commissioned for this Newsletter)

**Nancy Holmes**, Administrator, died December 2020, aged 91.  
*Suss-Ex Club* (obituary commissioned for this Newsletter)
Aubrey Jenkins, Chemistry, died April 2021, aged 93.
Suss-Ex Club (obituary commissioned for this Newsletter)

Mike Land, Neuroscience, died December 2020, aged 78.
Sussex News and Events, The Guardian, Current Biology

Greg Lawden, Mathematics, died January 2021; aged 80.
Suss-Ex Club (obituary commissioned for this Newsletter)

Sir John Lyons, Linguistics, died March 2020, aged 78.
Trinity Hall, Cambridge, British Academy

Garry Runciman (Viscount Runciman), Sociology, died December 2020; aged 86.

Brian Street, Anthropology, died 2017, aged 73.
Royal Anthropological Institute, Anthropology Today

Gerry Webster, Biology, died April 2021; aged 82.
Sussex News and Events

Biographical Memoirs – British Academy and Royal Society

Members may be interested to know that the British Academy and the Royal Society make their very thorough Biographical Memoirs of deceased Fellows available online. Two recently published, on former colleagues whose deaths have previously been noted, are those for Geoffrey Best and Edward Fraenkel.
Who are we?

Patron: Sir Gordon Conway

Founded in 2006 with the support of our patron, the Suss-Ex Club is for all ex-staff of the University with the purpose of keeping us connected and organising social events and activities for its members (partners welcome!).

We benefit from the support of the Alumni Office who maintain our members’ database and send out our Newsletters and Event alerts.

More information about Suss-Ex is available on its webpage at http://www.sussex.ac.uk/suss-ex/. ‘Suss-Ex Club’ in Google will get you there, as will http://tiny.cc/sussex, or you can find us in the A–Z on the University’s homepage.

Suss-Ex activities are organised by a steering group, which currently comprises:

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