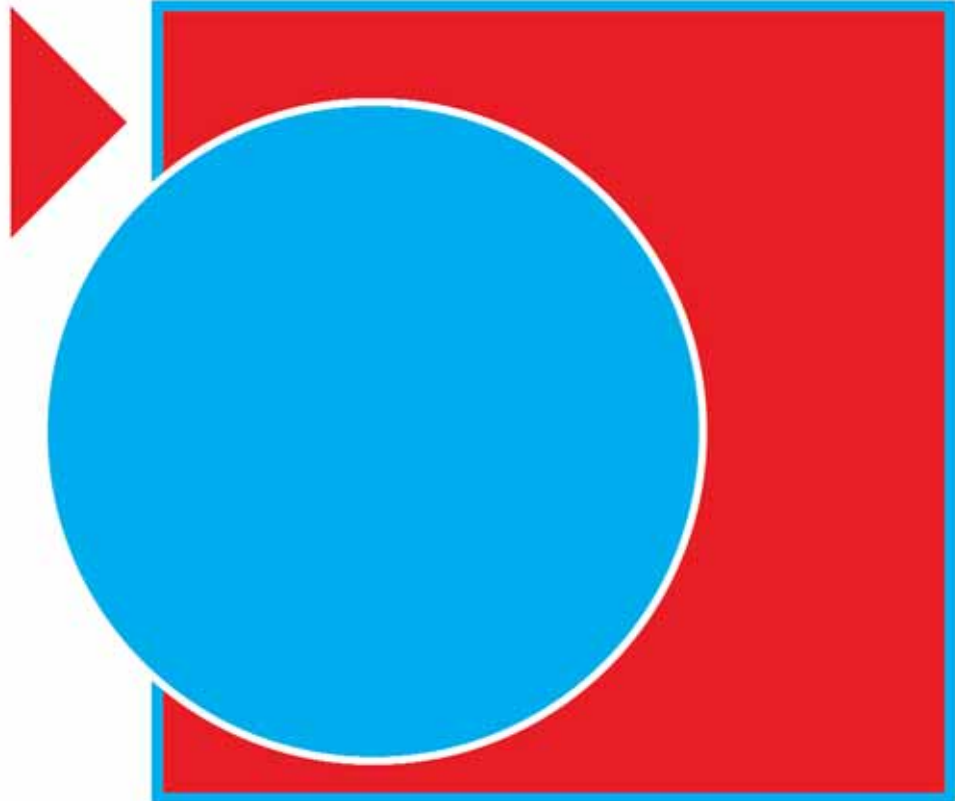


Arches

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Arches Editorial Board
Development & Alumni Relations Office
Newcastle University
6 Kensington Terrace
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU

Telephone: + 44 (0) 191 222 7250
Fax: + 44 (0) 191 222 5905
Email: alumni-office@ncl.ac.uk
Website: www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni

Cover Image



Paul Moss
'Thanks to the Blue Dot (January 16, 2006: NE 33)' is an artwork by Paul Moss that originates from an ongoing series of advertisements in a well-known gossip magazine. Readers were invited to touch a printed blue dot by a specific date that had been previously energised in order to bring people good luck. In his version Moss has extracted everything but the simple text and graphic, presenting an image that could have its formal history simultaneously in Constructivist Iconography and 80s revival. This direct image asking a direct question is part of an ongoing series of works Moss is developing, which examine the role of aspiration and communication through everyday materials and information that we take for granted. © Paul Moss 2006

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Foreword

Mark Scrimshaw,
Chair of the Alumni Association



I'm delighted that this issue has taken culture as its theme. Everyone who has ever visited this wonderful city will be only too aware of its own unique culture, bred into the bones of its people and into every brick of its buildings.

Our alumni have done great things in the arts, not least in visual art, and later in this edition we profile the two Fine Art graduates who've opened the city's new Workplace Gallery; and in music, nowhere better shown than the four graduates who formed Maximo Park. Their electrifying stage performances and Mercury Prize-nominated debut album *A Certain Trigger* won them huge acclaim, and they're exclusively interviewed later in *Arches*.

Another article looks at the long-awaited opening of Northern Stage, which is charged with fulfilling the enormous potential of the space formerly known as the Playhouse and Gulbenkian Theatre. Where once it sat a bleak and foreboding guard over Barras Bridge, almost defying the public to approach, now its glittering face welcomes in the city.

The University's cultural portfolio is flourishing, and at the very hub of this is Culture Lab, the £4 million digital media centre in the former Centre for Physical Recreation and Sport; the very building in which I used to fence! Still to come is the biggest of the lot, the Great North Museum, where £26 million will bring together all the University's wonderful collections of art, antiquities and natural sciences – from the Shefton Museum of Greek Art and Archaeology and Museum of Antiquities too – in a renewed Hancock Museum.

Through the work of the University, its graduates and other individuals and organisations throughout the region, the city's cultural revival is bringing new vibrancy to the old heart of Newcastle. We are all proud that the University is at the core of this renewal.

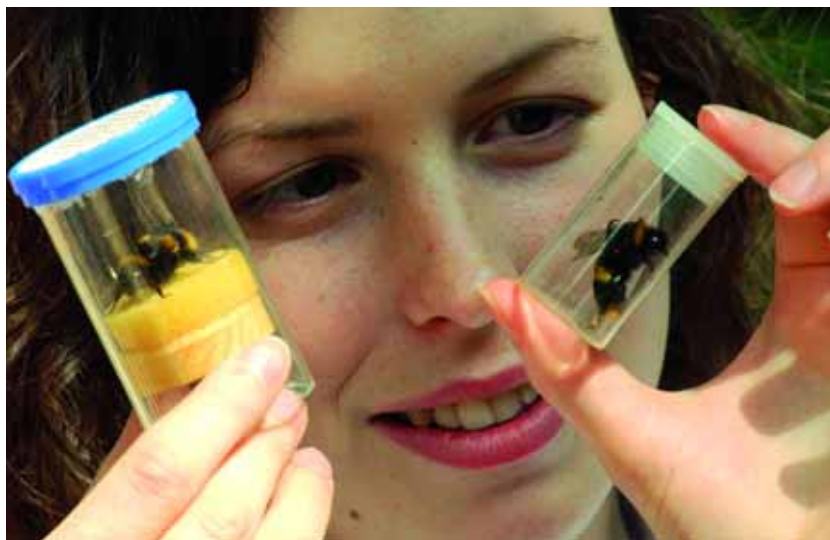
Mark Scrimshaw

News

For more information about any of these features and to keep up to date with the very latest Alumni News from Newcastle University, visit: www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni

Mapping the flight of the bumblebee

University researchers discover the remarkable homing instincts of bees



Recent graduate Steph O'Connor has had the country buzzing with excitement at her investigations into the homing instincts of bumblebees.

The *Guardian* newspaper, BBC national radio and regional TV were among the media reporting on her research project in July, after she found a common species of bee, *Bombus terrestris*, can find its way home from North East landmarks up to eight miles away.

The results have been surprising because scientific literature says *Bombus terrestris* travels only three miles for its food.

The project involves Steph catching bees from a nest on campus, marking

them with tiny identification numbers in the laboratory, dropping them off at landmarks such as the Angel of the North, the Tyne Bridge and the Metro and then observing which bees return.

Steph's project aims to find out how far the bees can travel and if certain environments are trickier to navigate than others; knowledge that will ultimately help with conservation strategies.

Steph, who graduated this summer from Newcastle University with a Wildlife Biology degree, is working on the project with insect specialists Dr Mark O'Neill and Dr Gordon Port, who is also a senior lecturer with the University's School of Biology and Psychology.

University tops business league

Newcastle University spends more time working with businesses than any other university in the UK, according to a survey by HEFCE, the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

The number of hours spent by staff 'engaging with commercial partners' was measured at all 160 universities and higher education colleges in the UK. Newcastle came out top, with the equivalent of 134 staff working full time with businesses at any one time.

The Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey is published annually, but this is the first time that data collected from individual universities has been included as annexes to the report.

The survey is conducted by HEFCE to provide information for policy makers about value for money and good practice. The result of the survey is a shot in the arm for economic strategy, which foresees universities working more closely with companies so that they can benefit from cutting-edge technology and expertise, giving them a competitive edge in global markets.

The University is a core partner in the Newcastle Science City initiative, launched by Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, which aims to bring together university researchers and entrepreneurs to stimulate the growth of high-tech industries. The initiative is expected to attract around 100 new technology-based companies to the region by 2010, and create up to 5,000 new jobs.

Professor Trevor Page, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for External Relations and Research at Newcastle University, said: 'Over the last few years we have invested in both people and infrastructure to allow our staff to engage more actively with the many aspects of our interactions with business and the community'.

University names next Vice-Chancellor

Professor Chris Brink to take up University post in 2007



Professor Chris Brink, who will be the next Vice-Chancellor

The head of one of South Africa's top universities is to take the helm of Newcastle University.

Professor Chris Brink, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, will succeed Professor Christopher Edwards as Vice-Chancellor of the University when he retires in 2007.

Professor Brink, an eminent mathematician who studied at Cambridge University, has attracted international attention for his transformation initiatives and diversification policies at Stellenbosch, which was once the intellectual home of the apartheid movement, in the 1960s and '70s.

Under a programme of inclusivity launched by Professor Brink in 2002, the number of black postgraduate students at Stellenbosch

has increased by 50 per cent, while the percentage of black undergraduates rose above 20 per cent last year.

Professor Brink has resisted pressure to make proficiency in Afrikaans compulsory for all students and academic staff, and argued instead for increased inclusivity through a more flexible language policy.

Professor Brink, who also has management experience in Australian higher education, said: 'I am honoured to be given the opportunity of leading Newcastle University. The combination of global and local challenges manifested here appeals to me, and I look forward to the prospect of integrating academic excellence with an international agenda as well as being a driver for local economic and social development.'

● **The University has launched its first 'carbon neutral' degree course, which will aid global efforts to stem climate change.**

The title, bestowed by the organisation CarbonNeutral Newcastle, recognises efforts by course designers to compensate for harmful 'greenhouse gas' emissions created through travel and energy consumption during the course's development. The move fits in with the ethos of the course, a two-year Master of Science degree (MSc) in Biodiversity, Conservation and Ecotourism, which teaches students to manage sustainable tourism projects in some of the world's top visitor spots. The course will be delivered in Thailand.

● **The University is attracting more students from neighbourhoods where young people are least likely to enter higher education, according to government figures.**

The Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA) annual performance indicators showed a total of 10.3 per cent of students gaining places at Newcastle in 2004–05 were from low participation neighbourhoods. Lesley Braiden, Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment, said: 'We are continuing to make good progress in terms of broadening our appeal to students from all backgrounds, especially in the North East'.

● **Meanwhile, performance indicators released by HESA reveal that Newcastle University graduates have one of the best track records in the country for getting good jobs.**

In 2005, 95 per cent of graduating students progressed to employment or further study within the first six months of graduation – well above the national average of 88 per cent.

Life-saving project is Tom's baby

Medical student Tom Poulton has seen off competition from more than 1,000 entrants to win a national Student Volunteering award for his work setting up a programme to teach new parents essential skills to save their baby's life.

Tom, who is a Royal Lifesaving Society lifeguard trainer/assessor with the North Sea Volunteer Lifeguards, was entered for his work in developing a pilot scheme to train 28 medical students to deliver community Save a Baby's Life sessions. These two-hour workshop sessions are delivered to groups of parents to teach them what to do if their baby starts choking or suddenly stops breathing.

So far the students have delivered sessions to over 200 parents in the North East, and the scheme has become so popular that another 20 students are set to become trainers later this year.

The Royal Lifesaving Society, the charity that administers Save a Baby's Life nationally, has given Tom a £5,000 development grant to assist with the expansion of the scheme.

Medical student, Tom Poulton, with his 'Save a Baby's Life' dummies



Bone marrow campaign goes global

Newcastle University medical students are helping to tackle a worldwide bone marrow shortage. They are leading the national committee of Marrow, an organisation set up by The Anthony Nolan Trust, with UK medical schools, to recruit, test and counsel potential donors at clinics on university campuses. Marrow would like to encourage medical schools in other countries to follow its example.

A group from Newcastle travelled to Croatia for the first leg of their global campaign, to share experiences with representatives of Croatia's National Organ Donation group. They are also working with the International Federation of Medical Schools to spread the word.

A bone marrow transplant is a procedure mainly given to patients with life-threatening diseases like leukaemia or other blood disorders.

Newcastle Marrow representative Tom Skeath said: 'Bone marrow transplants save lives.



Newcastle University PhD student Mark Pearson, who has donated his bone marrow to an anonymous recipient in Australia, and University medical student Nadia Stock, a recipient of bone marrow

The more people there are on the register, the more chance there is of survival for patients needing transplants.'

Rowers celebrate best ever season

Rowers George Laughton and Henry Pelly are World and European University Champions after winning the heavyweight men's double event at the World University Rowing Championship in Trakai, Lithuania. A second gold medal-winning performance followed, as part of a men's quad at the European event in Brive-la-Gaillarde, France.

In Trakai, the Newcastle pair, rowing for Great Britain, snatched victory over Poland by the narrowest of margins. A photo finish eventually showed them winning by a mere 0.08 seconds – or one inch – over a 2,000-metre course.

Henry said: 'We knew that anything could happen in the final. We were in with a good chance of a top three finish, and we could even be in a position to win gold. During the heats, we had the fastest time at half way, and we knew we just needed to stay with Poland and attack them if they showed a moment of weakness.'

In France, competing for Great Britain in a quad with fellow Newcastle students Stephen Feeney and Richard Francis, George and Henry were again in gold medal position, ahead of

crews from Germany and Spain, rounding off the most successful ever season for the University Boat Club.

Henry Pelly (left) and George Laughton, World and European University rowing champions





University gains Fairtrade status

Efforts to support ethical trading by students and staff have been given the seal of approval by the Fairtrade Foundation, the organisation dedicated to ensuring that producers from the world's poorest regions receive a fair price for their goods.

The Fairtrade mark is granted to organisations that adopt a fair trade policy to campaign for increased sale and consumption of fair trade products on campus.

Students' Union Society Ethics and Environment Officer, Lizzie Pitt said: 'Students are becoming more and more concerned for the plight of the world's poorest people, and for the future of the planet. It was demand from students that led the Union Society and the University to work together towards gaining Fairtrade status for the institution.'

Professor Nina Laurie is Director of the University's Developing Areas Research Network (DARN). Established in 2004, DARN brings together experts in the field of international development, including representatives from the UK's leading fair trade organisation, Team Valley-based Traidcraft, whose founder Richard Adams was awarded an honorary degree by the University in 2005.

Professor Laurie said: 'Gaining Fairtrade status is about much more than just supplying ethically traded produce on the campus. It's about encouraging staff and students to think carefully about the origins of their food and clothing, carrying their awareness of the need to find ways to fight poverty in the developing world into their everyday lives, and asking what steps they can take to make a difference'.

Honorary degrees awarded

Leading figures from the worlds of music, literature, science and health have been honoured by the University.

Tyneside-born Sting, singer-songwriter, activist, author, actor and former bassist and lead singer with The Police, was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Music (DMus) by the University at a ceremony in May.

Receiving honours at the same ceremony were former Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Lord Stevens (Honorary Doctor of Letters – DCL); Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir David King

(Honorary Doctor of Science – DSc); Mary Briggs and Elizabeth Hammill, founders of Seven Stories, the Centre for Children's Books (DCL); engineer and entrepreneur, Dr Alan Reece (DSc); and Len Fenwick, the Chief Executive of Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust (DSc).

Professor John Hamilton, the driving force behind a unique partnership arrangement between Newcastle and Durham Universities to widen access to medical education, also received a DSc, at a special ceremony held in July.

● **North East England's first-ever magnetic resonance research centre has opened following a £5 million investment.** The key feature of the Newcastle Magnetic Resonance Centre is a 'super-strength' magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanner, which is twice as strong as those normally used in hospitals. The scanner will be used for both treatment and research projects examining conditions such as liver and heart disease, diabetes, dementia, cancer and muscular dystrophy. Professor Roy Taylor is managing the centre with Andrew Blamire, Professor of Magnetic Resonance Physics, following an official opening by Professor Colin Blakemore, Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council.

● **Plans for a £7.75 million centre in Newcastle to develop new treatments for the diseases of old age have been approved in principle, after being selected as one of the country's high-priority projects.** Subject to final approval, the Clinical Ageing Research Unit (CARU) will be built on the Campus for Ageing and Vitality at the back of Newcastle General Hospital, in a joint venture by the University and the Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

● **A new centre for the study of poisons has opened in the University's Wolfson Unit.** Building on an existing collaboration between Newcastle University and the Health Protection Agency (HPA), the centre will carry out research into diseases caused by exposure to toxic chemicals such as pesticides, and the possible environmental causes of illnesses such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease. It will also help shape national crisis plans and will inform training of personnel who deal with acute chemical poisonings.

Updates

● **Newcastle University Business School is to begin training enterprise leaders in a new multi-million-pound, city-centre location that will also be its new headquarters.** From January 2007, the teaching of 'flagship' Masters' programmes, such as the highly regarded MBA, will be transferred from the main University campus to the new City Wall building on St James' Boulevard. The complex will also be home to Government Office North East and the Newcastle office of Ernst and Young.

● **The overwhelming majority of final-year students at Newcastle say they are very satisfied with the learning resources the University provides, according to the latest National Student Survey.** The University was among the top eight institutions for learning resources, including library and IT facilities. A total of 86 per cent of the final-year students who responded to the survey expressed a high level of satisfaction with the facilities available to them, compared with a national average of 79 per cent. Newcastle students also continue to be very satisfied overall with the standard of teaching and academic support they receive.

● **A new survey of university towns and cities has rated Newcastle among the best places to be a student in terms of facilities.** Students from more than 70 university towns rated their university's location for going out, shopping, transport links, community and facilities. Union Society Education Officer, David Bulmer, said: 'Students in Newcastle have always known it was a great city, so the results of the survey come as no surprise. Newcastle has been a bit of a hidden gem, but it looks like the rest of the country will soon be finding out that it's actually pretty good up north!'

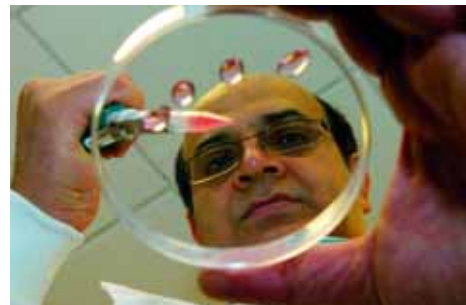
Progress in stem cell research

News headlines around the world have featured several developments in the stem cell research programme at the North East England Stem Cell Institute (NESCI).

NESCI is a partnership between Newcastle and Durham Universities and the NHS, and is partly based at the International Centre for Life. Karim Nayernia made international news with a world-first experiment just weeks after arriving to take up the post of Professor of Stem Cell Biology with the University.

Professor Nayernia, colleagues from Germany and Dr David Elliott from the University's Institute of Human Genetics used sperm grown from mouse embryonic stem cells to produce seven baby mice. The breakthrough helps scientists understand more about how animals make sperm, with potential applications in male infertility treatment.

The team working on nuclear reprogramming, therapeutic cloning, was in the spotlight for a scheme to source human eggs for research. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority gave Professor Alison Murdoch permission to recruit donors using an



existing clinical practice known as egg sharing. Under this scheme the research team will contribute to the cost of a patient's IVF treatment in return for the donation of some of her eggs for research.

Progress is also being made in research that uses material from babies' umbilical cords. Professor Colin McGuckin and Dr Nico Forraz formed a partnership with a US stem cell company, gaining funding to develop new therapies for liver patients. They are also developing and testing new tools for drug development. The pair travelled to the Vatican to discuss their pioneering work in September at a three-day world congress.

'Big Brother' eyes inspire police campaign

A University experiment, which found a way of making people act more honestly, is helping police deter criminals. The experiment found that people put nearly three times as much money into an unsupervised coffee room cash collection box when they were being watched by a pair of eyes on a poster.

Now West Midlands Police are using the idea in a region-wide crime crackdown campaign. Promotional posters will use a distinctive picture of eyes carrying the message 'We've got our eyes on criminals'. Chief Inspector Sue Southern, Head of the Press and PR Department at West Midlands Police, said: 'We liked the idea that eyes peering down at

thieves in crime hot spots could intimidate them into moving on rather than committing crime'.

Dr Bateson, of the Evolution and Behaviour Research Group in the School of Biology and Psychology, worked with Drs Daniel Nettle and Gilbert Roberts on the experiment. She said: 'We did the study just because we were interested in understanding human behaviour but it's really exciting that within a month of publication our findings are being applied to crime prevention'.

The study, published earlier this year in the Royal Society journal, *Biology Letters*, has gained global publicity. Media outlets that have covered the story include international TV and radio stations, UK broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, and many others.

A Newcastle graduate has been using the power of music to bring hope to the lives of people with disabilities in the North of England.

Annie Mawson (BA Geography 1971) is the charismatic founder of Sunbeams Music Trust, a charity which provides music as a form of therapy to children and adults with severe physical disabilities and special educational needs. Since its launch in 1992, Cumbria-based Sunbeams has achieved some astonishing results, and through its *Music for Life* programme, currently helps over 17,000 people each year to find a passion for music that brings new meaning to their lives.

'Music for Life is based on my passionate belief that music can transcend politics, finance and bureaucracy. That it has the ability to help people communicate when all other strategies have failed', said Annie. It is this sheer determination that has given a voice to such a large segment of the population, many of whom have been excluded from the opportunities and life choices that are often taken for granted today.

In September, Sunbeams reached the final of the National Lottery Awards 2006, after being voted the North West's favourite Lottery-funded project; an achievement that has finally brought it the recognition it deserves. Following this success, Sunbeams is now focused on a new project: building a bespoke music centre that will allow patients from across the world to benefit from the *Music for Life* programme. This project is already well underway, mainly thanks to the work of another Newcastle graduate, Annie's nephew Will Mawson (BA Architectural Studies 1999; BArch 2004).

Will, who works for Napper Architects in Newcastle, designed the new centre as part of his final-year architecture project. 'I originally approached Sunbeams with the idea of using music therapy as a vessel to build the project around', said Will, 'and the more I looked into the charity, the more it seemed to be crying out for a place of its own, where its beneficiaries could really maximise the effects of their therapy'.



Top: Annie at her nephew Will's graduation
Middle: A computer simulation of the proposed new centre
Bottom right: Annie Mawson, founder of the Sunbeams Music Trust

'You cannot open a door to show a glimpse of possibility, and slam it shut'

Annie Mawson

Although the idea was initially quite theoretical, the team at Sunbeams were hooked, and Will began working on plans to build a centre that was not only very practical, but would also captivate the imaginations of its visitors.

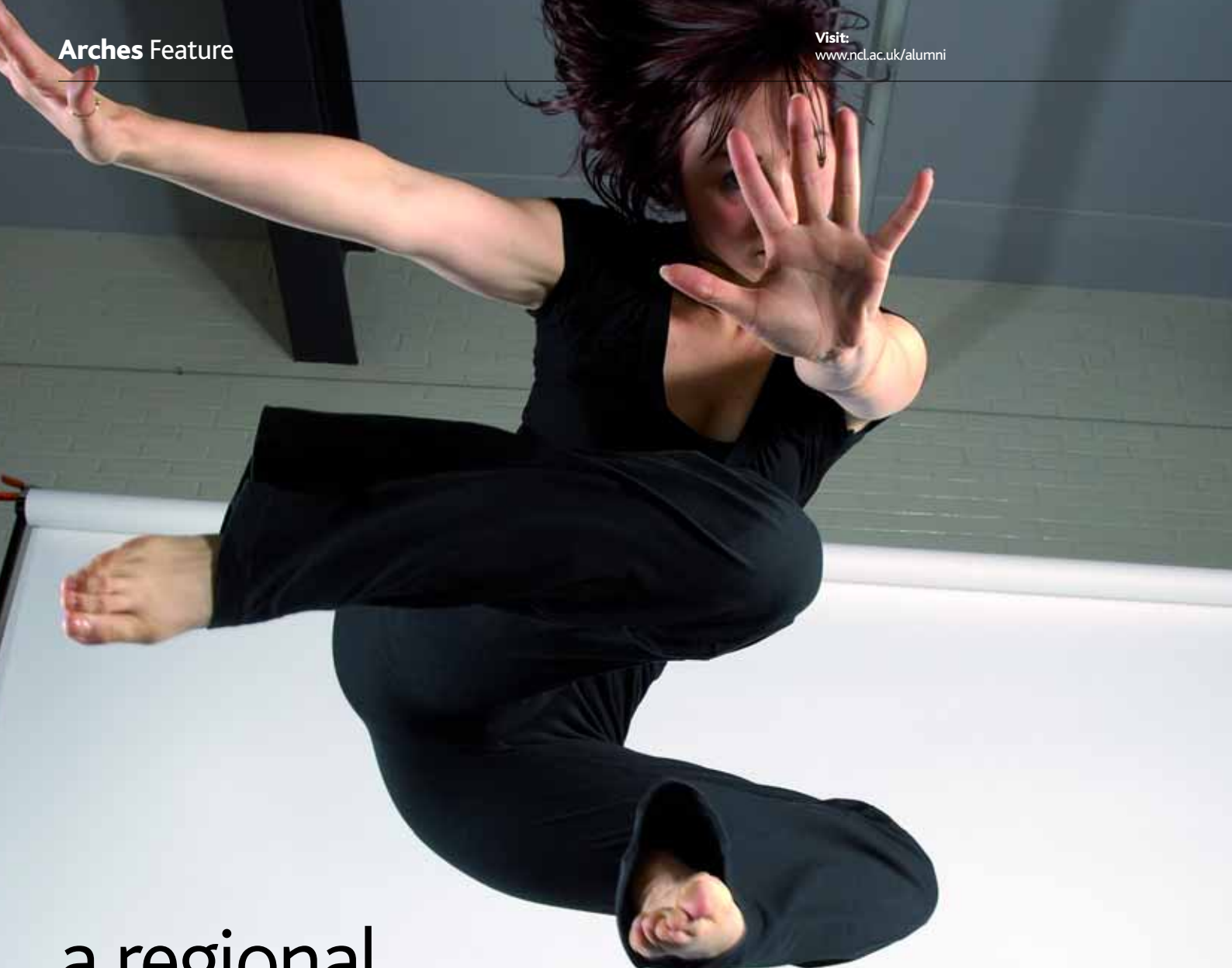
'The building will be designed around the concept of music, and how we relate to different spaces, rhythms and proportions', said Will. Both he and Annie feel strongly about the environment, and so the centre will be built with sustainability in mind. It will also be open to use by other organisations, providing fun and inspirational surroundings that will contrast with the bleak clinical facilities of the past. With no other purpose-built community music therapy centre in the UK, there is a clear need for more facilities, and thousands of potential visitors from across the world have already voiced their excitement about the proposed centre.

Having already acquired a picturesque piece of land at the edge of the Lake District, thanks to funding secured from the Francis C Scott Foundation, Annie's and Will's vision is being turned into a reality. The realisation of the project has brought with it a very real sense of continued responsibility and dedication. 'You cannot open a door to show a glimpse of possibility, and slam it shut', said Annie. 'It has now become our moral obligation to provide a pathway beyond.'

Further information about Annie and the Sunbeams Music Trust is available on their website at www.sunbeamsmusic.org



SOUND FOUNDATIONS



a regional . renaissance

Over the past decade, the North East of England has begun to emerge from the ashes of a once flourishing industrial empire, in which the harvesting of coal and its mastery of shipbuilding were key to its prosperity. Having already pioneered one industrial revolution, the region is now beginning to re-discover its cultural roots, and Newcastle University is at the heart of this renaissance.

With huge developments in art, music, literature, medicine and science, the work of the University is feeding the culture with a fully autonomous, slap-up meal of cultural diversity. In the wake of the failed bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2008, Newcastle and Gateshead are now leading a new initiative, Culture 10, which is succeeding in fixing an international eye firmly on the region. Here, *Arches* takes a look at how the city's cultural revolution is shaping up, and the key role that the University is playing through its development of a Cultural Quarter on campus.

Art and heritage

The North East is home to a vibrant art scene, whose success is very much due to the fact that many graduates from Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland Universities have chosen to stay and work in the region. The accomplishments of independent galleries such as Workplace (see page 14) have complemented those of the more established galleries, such as the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (which the University has been working with in both a practical and academic capacity), the Laing, and the University's own Hatton Gallery, and ensured that the local art community has as much of a voice as its international visitors.

Building work on the eagerly anticipated, £26 million Great North Museum project is also well underway. Bringing together three museums and thousands of years of history under one roof, its doors are due to open to the public in 2009.

Music and dance

Newcastle is also home to a range of organisations that are bringing new life to the region through the media of music and dance. The Sage Gateshead has established itself as an international beacon for excellence in music, and has attracted artists from across the world to perform in the region, as well as showcasing home grown talent. Dance is also emerging as one of the most exciting art forms of the twenty-first century, and the £7.6 million Dance City, close to St James' Park, is cultivating a crop of some of the country's most talented performers.

The new Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) for Music and Inclusivity, launched in 2005, aims to maximise student participation in musical education, and promote a wide range of musical practices through new approaches within the academic curriculum. Led by Newcastle University, the centre represents a regional consortium of North East Universities,

known as Unis4NE, in association with The Sage Gateshead. One of CETL's current projects gives its students the opportunity to have their compositions played at The Sage Gateshead by the Northern Sinfonia, recently described by *The Times* as the UK's third finest orchestra.

Literature, stage and screen

The North East has long been a hub of literary activity, and the University's School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics has forged relationships with organisations throughout the region, including New Writing North – the writing development agency for the North East of England – and Seven Stories, the Centre for Children's Books. Staffed by a number of established and prize-winning writers, the School is currently working with New Writing North to build a new home for literature in the region: the Northern Writers' Centre.

The University has also developed links with the new Northern Stage theatre (see page 12), and our very own theatre society, NUTS, continues to produce hugely talented performers, scriptwriters and technicians each year, many of whom have gone on to work throughout the region's cultural infrastructure. The University also has close links with the Tyneside Cinema, which is currently undergoing a £6.5 million refurbishment, and the volunteer-run Star and Shadow Cinema.

Business

Based in the Careers Service, the University's Enterprise Centre has been working to populate the region's cultural and creative sector with new graduate businesses. In fact, figures from the past year have shown that over 50 per cent of new business start-ups in the region have been within the cultural sector, and a large number of these have been launched by Newcastle graduates. The Enterprise Centre holds its annual Enterprise Challenge Awards each year, which celebrate the

entrepreneurial skills of students and graduates and help them to develop their business plans into a reality.

Culture Lab

This new £4 million facility is the hub of the University's interdisciplinary research activity involving digital media. Culture Lab provides access to state-of-the-art digital technologies that draw together artists, researchers and scientists from all three faculties and external partners in a building that fuses the 'two cultures' of arts and sciences. The groundbreaking research initiatives carried out in Culture Lab will further contribute to developing the region's creative, cultural and scientific industries.

Community engagement

Aside from its commitments to regional and academic development, the University is also keen to engage the local community in its work, and provide a platform for the public to voice their opinions. Café Culture is a scheme that provides an accessible space for intelligent and topical debate on science, culture and politics, and is held at World Headquarters in Newcastle on the first and third Mondays of each month. The University also runs a series of public lectures, which in the last year has attracted such eminent speakers as the writer Bill Bryson, and Poet Laureate Andrew Motion. Both schemes are open to everyone and free of charge.

In the next few editions of our bi-monthly e-newsletter *AlumNews*, we will take a look at each of these areas in more depth. If you don't already receive *AlumNews*, please see page 22 for details on how to subscribe.

For further information and links to all of the above mentioned facilities and organisations, please see the *Arches Online* version of this article at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/arches/features

The Sage Gateshead



BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art



Bamburgh Castle



TAKING THE STAGE

Following two years of closure and a £9 million refurbishment, the curtain has finally risen on the brand new Northern Stage theatre.

Encompassing the site of its former landlord, the now defunct Newcastle Playhouse, Northern Stage was officially opened over August Bank Holiday weekend in one of the most rapturous celebrations that Newcastle has seen this millennium. A crowd of over 1,000 people joined a phantasmagoric procession from Grey's Monument to the Barras Bridge site, which culminated in a breathtaking fire and light show, and performances from some of the city's most exciting arts groups.

Having spent much of the last two years in relative hermitry, Northern Stage is now back at its spiritual home in a building that pushes the boundaries of theatrical expectations. Moving aside from the old-fashioned grandeur of many more traditional establishments, Northern Stage embraces the versatile nature of black box theatre, and still retains many of the quirky original features of the old Playhouse.

Under the directorship of Erica Whyman, Northern Stage comprises three separate Stages (or performance areas), which have been designed to suit audiences of all ages, tastes and genres. Stage 1 is the venue for the theatre's more lavish productions, having opened with Erica's sensational interpretation of Dennis Potter's controversial 1968 television play *Son of Man*, and hosted Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, which has been spectacularly re-worked for the stage by Kneehigh Theatre.

Stage 2, on the other hand, is the UK's first free theatre; a bold experiment that is intended to make the groundbreaking work performed there as accessible as possible to the public. A firm believer in open access, Erica Whyman said, 'We want to give our audience the opportunity to try something new, to tell us what they think and to enjoy a very wide range of the best and most imaginative work from the UK and beyond'.

Below: The front entrance of Northern Stage, facing the Union Society building Clockwise from left: Production photos of Son of Man, On Top of the Town, and Wolves in the Wall



Although audiences are encouraged to make a donation after each performance, they are under no obligation to do so.

The old Playhouse foyer has been charmingly converted into the small but dynamic Stage 3. A purpose-built 'gigging space', Stage 3 is the venue for workshops, comedy and cabaret acts, and a number of productions for children. With adjustable seating and its very own bar, this is one of the most flexible stages in Newcastle.

With a number of UK premieres in the pipeline, and the country's first free performance space, Northern Stage is becoming known for the many 'firsts' it is bringing to theatre. A clear example of this is the soundproof acoustic wall that divides Stages 1 and 2; unique to Northern Stage and the first of its kind in the world. When the wall is removed it creates the Epic Stage, which is the largest performance area in the North East, and one of the most flexible in the UK.

Northern Stage is also home to one of the most talked-about pieces of contemporary art in the region at the moment: *Escapology* by Cath Campbell. The wooden sculpture has perplexed passers-by as to whether or not loose timber is actually falling from the roof. 'It isn't a safety hazard', laughs Peter Flynn, Communications Officer at Northern Stage, 'when visitors come to the theatre, they are escaping life's normal constraints of convention and time, and *Escapology* symbolises this'. Unusual and provocative, this piece of art certainly mirrors the work of Northern Stage, and Cath is currently working on a number of other installations for use within the foyer.

Erica Whyman is keen to collaborate with a number of other arts organisations and projects, and has developed a close working relationship with the University's School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics. The recent appointment of Professor Peter Reynolds to a Chair in Theatre has created a clear bridge between the work of the University and the theatre at Northern Stage, and paved the way

'The theatre is a place for the dissemination of both pleasure and knowledge'

Peter Reynolds, Chair in Theatre



for some exciting collaborative projects fusing theatricality with academic teaching and research.

'The theatre is a place for the dissemination of both pleasure and knowledge', said Professor Reynolds, 'and the University has a great reservoir of intellectual and creative capital that we hope will prove useful to the artists who work at Northern Stage'.

The unique nature of this partnership has already produced some interesting results. Annette Vieussieux, one of Professor Reynolds' postgraduate students, has documented the rehearsals of Northern Stage's first production, *Son of Man*, enabling audiences to get a feel for the complex processes involved in making theatre. Professor Reynolds added, 'Annette's work will also help theatre makers learn about good practice, as the opportunity doesn't often exist, particularly for young directors, to learn from each other's work'. The filming of rehearsals, photographs, interviews and rehearsal diaries are available in the *Take Part* section of Northern Stage's website.

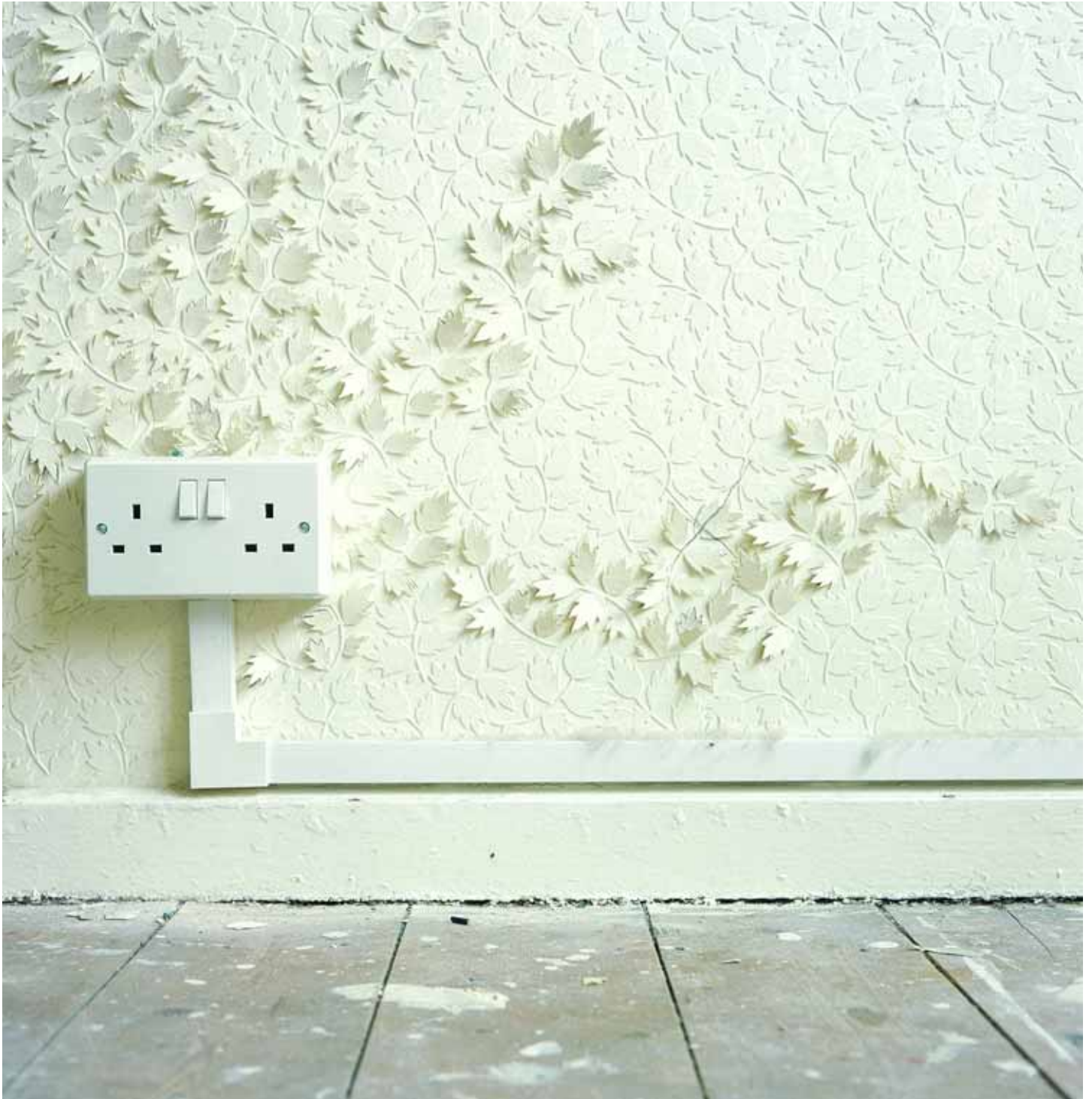
Northern Stage is also keen to develop solid links with the community, and has initiated a number of participation schemes with schools and organisations. This has led to projects such as *On Top of the Town*, which saw a group of eight young thespians from across the North East treading the boards at Northern Stage with young actors from Holland.

From humble beginnings almost half a century ago, Northern Stage has emerged as the largest producing theatre company in the North East, and one of the top 10 in the UK. Its dedication to presenting the best in local, national and international theatre can only help to bring attention to Newcastle; and its commitment to accessibility is opening up the magic of performance to whole new audiences. What a great neighbour to have.

More information on Northern Stage and an up-to-date programme are available on their website www.northernstage.co.uk

Art at work

Vibrant, innovative and verbose, Newcastle's art scene is building international renown for its ingenuity; and nobody could be making much more of a statement than the Workplace Gallery.





Opposite page: 'If walls could talk...' by Catherine Bertola (BA Fine Art 1999) 2002 **Top to bottom:** The opening of an exhibition at the Workplace Gallery, which sits underneath the towering Trinity Square car park (below); one of Workplace's exhibition spaces; 'Forming Attachments' by Tanya Axford (BA Fine Art 1997), a mixed media installation at Newcastle's Laing Gallery in 2001

An artist-led organisation, Workplace was launched in 2003 by Newcastle graduates Paul Moss (BA Fine Art 1998) and Miles Thurlow (MA Fine Art 2000) to help develop projects for artists who live and work in the North East.

The gallery itself was opened in August 2005, to provide a creative space for the group's work to take root. Located directly beneath the iconic figure of Owen Luder's brutalist Trinity Square Car Park in Gateshead town centre, made famous in the cult classic gangland movie *Get Carter*, the gallery is a hive of creativity that brings vibrancy to an otherwise bleak, post-industrial landscape. Only a stone's throw from the newly regenerated Gateshead Quayside, the town centre has suffered from a considerable lack of investment, which makes it an intriguing location for a gallery with such a colourful portfolio of artists.

'The choice to situate a new gallery in this context reflects Workplace's commitment to the production and presentation of art that is uncompromising, direct, and rooted in the attitude of the region', said Paul whose own work with architecture and the built environment, mainly in the form of installations, has led to critical acclaim.

Miles is currently Head of Sculpture at the University of Sunderland, and has exhibited extensively throughout the North East. As directors of the gallery, Miles and Paul have introduced a programme of contemporary art that has attracted new and established artists from across the world to exhibit at Workplace; this includes Lisbon-based Hugo Canoilas, who is widely considered to be one of Portugal's most important young artists.

In addition to this programme of exhibitions, Workplace also represents a portfolio of 23 of the North East's most promising artists; 13 of whom are graduates of Newcastle University. Among these are Cath Campbell, whose installation *Escapology* graces the roof of Newcastle's brand new Northern Stage theatre, and award-winning visual artist Matt Stokes. Matt's 16mm film *Long After Tonight*, which documents the gathering of a group of Northern



Soul fans in St Salvador's Church, Dundee, won him the prestigious Beck's Futures prize for 2006, one of the highest accolades in British contemporary art.

Successes such as Matt's have not only attracted the attention of a wide critical audience to the North East, but also allowed artists to tear down the confines traditionally imposed on provincial art, and take their work to an international platform.

The profile of Workplace and its artists is growing significantly each year. Now a regular fixture at art fairs across the country, Workplace is forging links throughout Europe, and building relationships with some of the biggest names in contemporary art. Where it was once reliant on grant support from organisations such as Gateshead City Council and the Arts Council, Workplace is now becoming increasingly financed by art sales and private investment. Since opening in 2005, the gallery has sold work by its artists to major international collections, including those owned by UBS, Ernst & Young, and the Government Art Collection, as well as numerous individuals and private collectors.

Having already exhibited at art fairs and festivals such as Glasgow International, Pulse in New York, and Zoo in London in 2006, Workplace is set to travel to Miami for the New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) Art Fair in December, where it will showcase the work of Matt Stokes as a solo project.

Not forgetting its roots in the North East however, Workplace still continues to promote its artists within the region itself, and the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art on Gateshead's Quayside has been the venue for a number of exhibitions by Workplace artists, including Paul and Miles themselves.

With a global eye now fixed firmly on the North East art scene, Workplace continues to produce some of the most innovative contemporary art in the business. It seems a new industrial age may just be upon us.

For more information on the Workplace Gallery, visit its website at www.workplacegallery.co.uk





a certain sensibility

Since the launch of their debut album in 2005, Maximo Park have emerged as one of the UK's most illustrious rock bands. Dressed like quintessential English gentlemen, and delivering their post-punk sound with erudite articulacy, the band have been showered with critical acclaim for their mix of eclectic musical styles and poetic lyricism.

Maximo Park consists of four Newcastle graduates: front man Paul Smith (BA Combined Studies 2001, MA The Americas: Histories, Societies, Cultures 2002); drummer Tom English (BA Combined Studies 2001); bassist Archis Tiku (MBBS 2000); and keyboard player/vocalist Lukas Wooller (BA Combined Studies 1999); as well as one Northumbria graduate, guitarist Duncan Lloyd.

Riding the crest of an international tour that has taken them from Newcastle to Niigata, the band are also putting the finishing touches to their second album, which will be due for release in 2007. Despite his busy schedule, Teesside born Paul Smith found time to talk to *Arches* about Maximo Park's meteoric climb to the pinnacle of pop.

From relative obscurity, your first album *A Certain Trigger* stormed the UK charts and plastered your names all over the music industry, really putting Newcastle on the map. How's life at the top treating you?

We can't complain, considering the circumstances. The past two years have given us so many memories and a platform from which to express ourselves in the future. Life is busy but exciting, although I feel we're grasping at the middle rungs rather than clinging to the top!

Although you're not all native Geordies, you seem well rooted in Newcastle. What is it about the North East that appeals to you?

It's the place where we all feel comfortable. There's a rich quality of life and a strangely pleasant isolation from fads and scenes without the loss of cultural activity. The coastal location is a massive part of why I love the area.

You've written a song about the A19 from Teesside to Newcastle. Has your music been inspired at all by your time at university?

Without a doubt. The intermingling of characters and social situations led me to grow up a lot, especially when I was doing my MA. A lot of the first album was written about moving away from home and the various ties that bind us to places, especially regarding relationships. A19 is a specific song about the realisation that

an entire world exists outside of the bubble we create for ourselves. During my time at University, I certainly travelled up and down that particular road a fair few times!

Do you still maintain any links with the University?

I recently signed a petition to keep the old Fine Art library, but to no avail. Some friends actually work at the University so in the meagre amount of time I spend at home, I try to keep abreast of the changes that occur, whilst enjoying the culinary delights of the Old Library building!

***A Certain Trigger* was packed with such a level of diversity, and whilst music critics are in a reverie over what your influences must be, the rest of us are just enjoying your distinctive sound. How did you develop a style that transcends so many boundaries and tastes?**

The fact that all five of us have a direct influence on the songs and their arrangements means our individual tastes and influences surface without any of us being able to put a finger on them. The rest of the lads were a tight musical unit before they asked me to join so it was fairly easy for me to slot in. Conceptually, we decided from day one that we would write pop songs that encompassed as many styles as we felt comfortable with.

You've developed a reputation as the gentlemen of the post-punk revival, and you clearly set a great example to bands all over the world. How do you feel about bands that put bad behaviour before their music?

I had no idea of our reputation! If people are polite to me then they'll receive similar behaviour. We are lucky to be playing music to pay the bills, and our belief in the music means we want to communicate with the people we meet and play for. A lot of bands probably get bored of the regularity of playing the same songs and answering the same questions, but perhaps their songs weren't as interesting as they first thought! Bad behaviour has been seen so many times before and we don't like cliché...

Maximo Park was only fully formed after you all graduated, but you pursued different musical interests whilst at university. What was university life like for a bunch of aspiring young musicians?

From my point of view, the instrumental music I was making never had any commercial appeal, so my aspirations were purely creative.

It frustrated me that there wasn't as much interest in left-field music outside of a tightly knit community, but you find your allies quite quickly at university.

Before Maximo Park took off, you had some very noble jobs. Paul you were an art teacher, Archis a doctor, and Lukas a trained chorist. Do any of your old skills still come in handy?

I like to sketch from time to time and I have a keen awareness of what I require from the artwork we produce. Archis has been called upon frequent times for his medical knowledge, but Lukas is rarely asked for a choral recital!

Over the past few years, the live music scene in Newcastle has really improved, with some great venues and some really talented up-and-coming bands. How do you see things in Newcastle developing, and are you sticking around for the long term?

As long as we live in Newcastle, people will see us at a variety of gigs. A lot of our friends are involved in the music scene, but my worry is that its standards and methodology remain a little insular.

However, I see a strong vein of musical individualism that gives me faith that the future of music in the area is rosy enough. We are all committed to a long-term future in the North East, but who knows when one of us will feel sufficiently restless and disappear? I read an article recently that suggested we should start a record label and support local talent, which is a lovely idea, but I wonder which of our rare days off I would choose to do all this...?

You're currently working on your second album with legendary producer Gil Norton. How's it coming along?

We've finished mixing it, but we need to finalise the artwork and get it mastered. We see it as a progression from the last record, and we are proud of the results. It's more open and quite weighty, but still as energetic and melodic.

Paul – your onstage presence and innovative dance moves can rival the flexibility of Mick Jagger himself. Did you and Mick swap notes when you supported the Rolling Stones this summer?

Hah! I only got to talk about the weather and our outfits before they were whisked off to the stage. I'd love to think I will have the same energy when I'm 63 years old, but I'm not counting on it!

Classroom muse



An interview with Chrissie Gittins, award-winning author and children's poet

Have you ever wondered what you might find in a wish sandwich, or what a two-toed sloth boasts about? Maybe you haven't, but these are the questions that are fascinating kids across the country at the moment thanks to a new poetry collection by Chrissie Gittins (BA Hons General Arts 1975).

I Don't Want an Avocado for an Uncle is Chrissie's second collection of poems that not only ignites children's imaginations, but provides them with a fun way to learn at the same time. Her work is witty, original and unpatronising, leading to widespread critical acclaim that has already seen *I Don't Want an Avocado for an Uncle* selected as one of the Poetry Book Society's recommended classroom texts for the coming year.

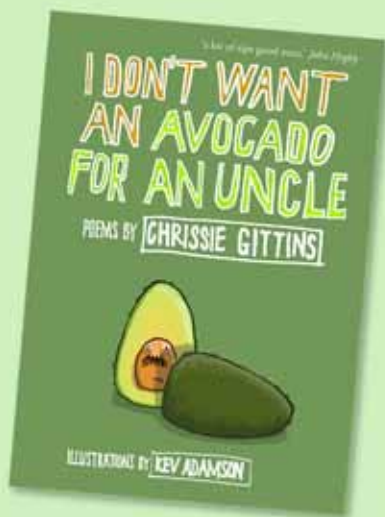
Chrissie also writes extensively for adults. Her first adult poetry collection, *Armature*, was published in 2003, and a number of her short stories have appeared on BBC Radio Four. *Arches* caught up with Chrissie to find out what all the fuss is about:

You write very successfully for both children and adults, is it difficult to channel your work in two distinct directions?

Not at all. Some ideas are best suited to children's poems, and others to adult poems, radio plays or short stories. I tend to work on children's poems as the ideas come to me; the rest have to wait for stretches of time, or have to fit into schedules for BBC Radio Four.

'I think that adults have always read and re-read stories that captivate their playful side'

Chrissie Gittins



Adults are as fascinated by children's literature as kids at the minute. Why do you think this is?

There's some very good writing around for children. Cross-over packaging and marketing has introduced adults to children's literature, but I think that adults have always read and re-read stories that captivate their playful side.

You've been described as having a great flair for idiomatic surrealism. Where do you get your inspiration?

From conversations, stories I'm told, incidents I see, and from situations which amuse, puzzle, disturb and stay with me. A child at a school might suggest a subject – a boy thrust a pencil stub at me and challenged me to write a poem about it, which I did. Another asked if I could write a poem about what happens to time after it has passed, this became the poem *Storing Time*.

You've been a resident writer in a number of schools and libraries, as well as in a prison and at the Refugee Council. How do you think your writing impacts on the different groups of people you work with?

If the children and adults I work with see how writing is an integral part of my life, and how it is the way that I make sense of the world, then it isn't difficult for them to find their own subject matter and see themselves as writers – whether it's for an afternoon, a week, or a lifetime.

You've navigated rough terrain by boat and quad bike to give poetry readings at hard-to-reach schools. Does it make it all worthwhile for the reaction you get from the children you work with?

It does indeed! As I left a Bexhill school at the end of the day one week, two boys were sitting outside on a picnic bench. They had a copy of each of my books in their hands and they were reading the poems to each other. It was a lovely image to go away with.

Have you got anything else in the pipeline?

In March 2007 Salt Publishing are bringing out my first collection of short stories for adults called *Family Connections*. One story is partly set in Newcastle: a student in her first term at the University moves from a council property with a landlady and flea-ridden cat in Denton Burn to her first flat-share in Heaton!

***I Don't Want an Avocado for an Uncle* is available now priced £5.99 from selected bookshops, and from Chrissie's website at www.chrissiegittins.co.uk**

**Latest news from the independent voice
of Newcastle students**

Taking on the world by Tom Marling

A Newcastle rower is quite literally taking the world by storm as he prepares to embark on an around-the-world rowing expedition. Mechanical Engineering student Joe Leiserach has been chosen to join the Row Extreme World Row Challenge, the ultimate test of endurance around the globe. Joe was chosen from a group of the international rowing community's finest young talents to join a crew comprising some of the strongest and most experienced rowers in the world.

The challenge, which involves rowing 20,000 miles around the world, is expected to take approximately a year to complete. Joe's selection from around 50 international applicants is all the more remarkable considering he only learned to row after joining the University three years ago. He will join numerous rowing luminaries including Ian Woods, a former Olympian, on the final leg of the epic voyage that covers the 7,000-mile, four month-long stretch from South Africa to Australia.

Joe said: 'Most people think I must be mad to attempt this, but it is just such an amazing opportunity to do something so completely different. Nobody has ever attempted to row around the world over three consecutive oceans before, and this will be the experience of a lifetime'.

Joe has just returned from rowing the 'Boston Marathon' on the River Witham, in Lincolnshire, where he completed the 31-mile course in a time of four hours and eleven minutes – fourteen minutes ahead of his nearest rival in the senior single scull event.

The first leg of the expedition, from Australia to South America, will begin in October 2007. The 8,000-mile trip is expected to take around five months, while the 5,000-mile second leg, between South America and South Africa, is set to take three months.

If all goes according to plan Joe will join the final stage of the challenge in South Africa in June 2008, arriving in Australia in October. However in the meantime, he is facing the more immediate challenge of raising £16,000 to cover the cost of taking part. 'I'm aiming to raise the first £5,000 by Christmas', said Joe. 'It's hard work, but I've had a great response so far in terms of raising the profile of what I'm aiming to do. What I need now is to be able to turn all the good will into serious financial commitment.' Joe is due to graduate in July 2007, but hopes to stay in the North East to complete his training, he explained: 'I've loved rowing on the Tyne, and I feel really settled here'.



A Fresher kind of fun

It's not often that a sore head and depleted bank balance will leave a smile on someone's face, but for over 4,000 first-year students, this year's Freshers' Week has certainly been something to grin about.

Run by the Union Society, Newcastle's Freshers' Week (also known as First Year Conference or FYC) has a reputation as one of the best in the UK.

The new crop of first years was welcomed to Newcastle with a programme packed full of activities, and a mix of big-name acts roped in to entertain the masses. Live performances from rock band Dirty Pretty Things and globetrotting DJ Judge Jules were two of the week's undoubted highlights, whilst live comedy and the opportunity to take part in a spot of paintballing and go-karting helped to create one of the most diverse and enjoyable FYCs in history.

One of this year's organisers, Ben Potter, was also a contestant on University Challenge, bringing a touch of academia to an otherwise raucous celebration.

New Union Society website launched

The Union Society has launched a brand new website for 2006/07. With a clearer student focus and emphasis on accessibility; the new website has been built with a clean design, easier navigability and a number of new features to bring the Union bang up to date with the latest web technology.

As part of the new site, the Union has introduced a social e-networking system which will allow users to share photos, write blogs, and send each other messages. It also contains up-to-the-minute events and gig listings straight from the Union's Entertainments Team, and will allow users across the world to listen to the new, digitally streamed Newcastle Student Radio (NSR) 24 hours a day.

You can visit the Union website at www.unionsociety.co.uk

Sowing the seeds of sustainability

A historic farm, deep in rural Northumberland, is set to become an international centre for renewable energy.

Situated 18 miles North of Newcastle and owned by the University, Cockle Park is a fully working farm that produces crops and grazes livestock. It is also the proposed site for one of the most exciting ventures in the history of the University's School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

As part of Science City, a portion of the farm will be converted into the proposed Centre for Renewable Energy from Land (CREEL). The new centre will generate its own heat and electricity, and provide space for interdisciplinary research, educational facilities and equipment demonstration, including a virtual reality training facility.

Adjacent to the research and education buildings is Pele Tower, a historic Grade I listed building, which is set to be transformed into state-of-the-art business accommodation. Along with a number of surrounding buildings, the tower will form a 'science village', in which space will be available for lease by small and medium-sized

businesses working in the energy and environment sectors.

In addition to this, the site contains a number of residential properties that will also be fed with renewable heat and electricity from the centre, embodying the very idea of a sustainable community.

Work has been underway to develop new kinds of fuel, and the School already operates a fully biodiesel powered mini-bus (pictured), which runs to and from Cockle Park on a daily basis. Produced from waste vegetable oil, biodiesel has a production price of only 50 pence per litre, which allows even more money to be ploughed back into new research.

Due to be up and running by early 2008, CREEL is expected to become the leading facility of its kind in the UK, and will significantly aid global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and generate energy from renewable resources.

Keep an eye on *Arches* and *AlumNews* to keep you up-to-date with all future developments in this project.



Did you graduate in 2002/03?



You may recall completing a questionnaire, six months after you finished your studies in 2002/03, as part of the Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA) Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey. You may have seen information from the survey in the media – as part of the university league tables for example. The information you provided will also have been used within the University and by the government.

There is now another opportunity for some of you to let us know what you have been doing since you gained your qualification. YouGov/IFF Research, on behalf of HESA, are conducting a survey (Longitudinal DLHE) and they may send you a questionnaire. The questionnaire will ask you to detail your current activities, and some of you will also get the opportunity to detail all the activities you have been involved in since you graduated in 2002/03. Any information you provide will help in reviewing and promoting courses and giving current students an insight into early career progression, as well as providing input to government policy development and review.

If you are contacted by YouGov/IFF Research (by e-mail, post or phone), please take time to complete the survey and return it – your participation is valuable.

You will be able to see the results of this survey on the web next summer.

The global right to health

A team of over 50 medical students have won the chance to host next year's Medsin Global Health Conference in Newcastle. Set to attract over 400 visitors to the University, the Conference will take place on campus from Saturday 24 to Sunday 25 March 2007.

Medsin is a national network of health care students, with branches at medical schools throughout the UK. Its aim is to empower health care students to educate themselves about issues peripheral to core curricula, but central to the reality of health care, and raise awareness of the inequalities in health. The annual Global Health Conference is designed to inspire future health professionals to take an interest in issues relating to international development, human rights and social injustice.

Next year's Conference is themed 'Health and Human Rights', and aims to discuss how the establishment of basic human rights is key to achieving health for the global community. Over 64 hours of workshops, discussions and lectures will

give the 400 visiting health care students the opportunity to exchange their views with a number of international experts in health and development, as well as to develop key skills in leadership, teamwork and project management.

Selina Rodrigues, a fourth-year medical student and Co-ordinator of the forthcoming Conference, said: 'We hope to inspire and motivate a generation of health professionals to be aware of the most pressing health issues facing the global community, so that future medical professionals can contribute to the alleviation of poverty, ill health and injustice in the developing world.'

'As health professionals, it's our responsibility to alleviate suffering and promote conditions that ensure health and well being. This goal cannot be achieved without protecting, promoting and fulfilling human rights.'

Selina and her team have also introduced a strict ethical and environmental policy, by pledging to use fairtrade products wherever possible, and processing all recyclable waste.

If you are interested in attending or taking part in the Conference, please visit the Conference website at www.medsinnewcastle.org.uk/ghc

For more information on Medsin and its work, please visit www.medsin.org



Newcastle and Northumbria honour health pioneers

Two Newcastle alumni have been honoured for their outstanding contribution to the development of health services, nursing and medical education in the region.

Professor Alan Maynard (BA Hons Economics 1968) and the Reverend Canon Alan Maude (MSc Child Health 1990) were awarded honorary degrees as part of the Centenary celebrations of Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary in October. They were among six leading figures from the region to be honoured during the first ever ceremony held jointly by Newcastle and Northumbria Universities.

Currently Chairman of the York NHS Trust, Professor Maynard has played a key role in reforming NHS policy over the past two decades, and has worked with a number of international organisations to improve health care in some of the World's most impoverished countries.

The Reverend Canon Maude has recently retired after giving more than 30 years' service to the RVI. As Head of the Chaplaincy, he was instrumental in providing the great levels of care for patients and their families that have led to Newcastle's standing as one of the best NHS Trusts in the country.



Professor Alan Maynard (top) and Reverend Canon Alan Maude

A new virtual home for alumni

Now you can access everything you need from the University at the click of a button. The Alumni Association has recently launched a brand new website, which is packed full of useful features to help make your life after university as easy as possible.

The new site includes details of our improved benefits and services package, offering exclusive discounts to Newcastle graduates, as well as the opportunity to track down old friends through *NUGrad*, our online alumni directory. The site also features a fully interactive events section, where you can view our full calendar of events, book tickets online, and browse photos from previous alumni events.

Thanks to the phenomenal response from our recent survey, the new site also heralds the launch of *Arches Online*, allowing readers to access the University's flagship magazine in a fully interactive, eco-friendly format. This new paperless *Arches* not only allows readers to access the magazine wherever they are in the world and submit stories and ideas directly to the editor, but

will also help improve sustainability by supporting the University's carbon neutral commitments, and allow us to release essential funds to support more student-focused projects throughout the University.

AlumNews, our bi-monthly e-newsletter, has also received a makeover as part of the new website. Distributed to around 22,000 of our alumni with up-to-date e-mail addresses, *AlumNews* keeps readers fully abreast of news and developments from the University and our alumni community, and contains details of upcoming alumni events and reunions.

You can visit the new site at

www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni

Sign up to receive *AlumNews*

There are over 50,000 of you who don't currently receive *AlumNews*, so if you would like to subscribe, you can do so using our online *NUGrad* service.

All you need to do is visit the *NUGrad* website at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/nugrad and enter your alumni reference number, which you will find printed above your name on the carrier sheet/ update form that was delivered with this copy of *Arches*.

If you are a new user, then please take the time to register a few details to give you full access to the service. Alternatively, if you have already signed up to *NUGrad*, but forgotten your password, the new service allows you to re-set your password without needing to contact the office.

When you have logged in to *NUGrad*, follow the link to the 'update your details' section. If we do not have your current e-mail address, please update us with it in the space provided and you will automatically begin to receive *AlumNews* in February when the next edition is sent out.

Why not then continue to use *NUGrad* to track down old friends, or other Newcastle alumni in your area? Containing information and latest news from alumni all over the world, it couldn't be easier to get back in touch.

www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/nugrad



Working together



If you're looking for a challenging and diverse role that will engage you in the very heart of activities here at Newcastle University, then we're looking for you.

Becoming an Alumni Volunteer gives you the chance to renew your involvement with the University, catch up with old friends and mix with fellow graduates both socially and professionally. Working with the Alumni Association also allows you to tap in to our global network of graduates, and engage in some of the groundbreaking work that's being conducted both on campus and through collaborative partnerships across the world.

'Alumni Volunteers are playing a key role in ensuring the success of the University, and raising its profile throughout the world', said Lauren Huntington, Alumni Relations Officer. 'Our volunteers are really making a difference both on and off campus.'

For a copy of *Working Together*, our volunteer brochure, please e-mail your name and graduation details to alumni-office@ncl.ac.uk

Calling all brand-new graduates

Have you graduated from Newcastle in the last year? If so, please keep an eye out for an important questionnaire that should be dropping through your letterbox any time soon.

The University is required to survey all recent graduates to find out what they are doing approximately six months after graduation. Overall results contribute to our position in university league tables, so this is an opportunity to influence how Newcastle University is perceived nationally. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to the address given. Every response is greatly valued.



Railway research on track for success

Ever the topical issue on packed commuter trains across the UK, our quest for a better standard of public transport on the country's railways remains largely unfulfilled. With much of Europe and many countries beyond enjoying the pleasure of quick, reliable and comfortable railway transport, the UK seems to be stuck in the past. However, award-winning work from the University's railway research centre looks set to put the UK back on track.

Based in the School of Mechanical and Systems Engineering, NewRail has recently been awarded University Research Centre (URC) status for the next five years, in recognition of the depth and breadth of the research it is currently conducting.

Under the directorship of Professor Mark Robinson, NewRail scooped the prestigious JEC (European Composite Exhibition) award for 'Composites in Land Transport' in 2004, and is

currently split into four distinct groups, each looking at a specific research area.

These research groups range from looking at safety issues concerning rail systems, materials, structures and the interface between wheel and rail, to the interconnection of rail with other forms of transport (ie road, sea and waterways) and transport studies. In collaboration with the University's Industrial Statistics Research Unit (ISRU), NewRail's rail systems group looks at issues relating to passengers and freight, in an attempt to maximise the effectiveness of railway transport.

NewRail has its very own full-scale test facility in Derbyshire, which includes over a mile of running track, and it is unique for a URC to have such a facility off-site.

The centre continues to raise its profile throughout the railway industry through a series of newsletters, conferences and open days.

For further information on the work of NewRail, please visit its website at www.newrail.org



Classnotes

If you would like your news to be printed in the next issue of *Arches*, please contact DARO

either by phone on 0044 (0) 191 222 7250 or by e-mail at alumni-office@ncl.ac.uk

1930s

Twin brothers **Henry SODEN-BIRD (LLB 1937)** and **Drew SODEN-BIRD (LLB 1935)** were two of the earliest LLB graduates of Armstrong College, later King's College, Durham before it became Newcastle University. Henry's son, Charles Soden-Bird graduated from the University with a BA in Combined Studies in 1980, and is now also a solicitor. Drew still takes a keen interest in University matters, and lives in Whitley Bay.

1950s

Dr Salil Kumar MAJUMDAR (PhD Agriculture 1957) returned to India after his graduation, where he took up an academic post with Gauhati University. He was appointed as Professor of Agronomy in 1965, and remained at Gauhati until his retirement in 1987. Dr Majumdar was married in 1958, and has a son, who also works in agriculture, and a daughter.

John STUBBS (BDS 1958) and **Meg STUBBS (MBBS 1958)** met as first-year students, and married on 4 July 1956. They graduated on their second wedding anniversary in Durham Cathedral in an imposing ceremony, and moved to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in January 1959, where they worked hard in medicine, dentistry, and civic affairs. They have also enjoyed the beauty of Africa. About to depart on their Golden Wedding celebration trip around the world, including a cruise in the Caribbean, John and Meg will visit family and friends en route, and end up in Auckland, New Zealand, to settle for a few months.

1960s

Heather MÜLLER née GAGE (BA General 1962) taught in the UK following her graduation, before moving to work for the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe in 1969, where she married her

husband. In 1972 Heather moved to Botswana and taught on a part-time basis, before the birth of her daughter in 1974. Since 1975, Heather and her family have lived in Germany, where she works as a freelance teacher and translator.

Dr Adrian RANDALL (BA Geography 1963; PhD 1972) and other former members of the Cross Country club held a reunion at Close House, Newcastle in May 2006. If there is anyone out there who ran for King's College in the 1960s, Adrian wants to hear from you. You can e-mail him at arandall69@btinternet.com

Mike SHARPE (Civil Engineering 1968) has just finished his year as President of the Institution of Highways and Transportation. Previous presidents from Newcastle have been Professors Fisher Cassie, Tom Williams and Peter Hills. Mike has retired as Director of Transportation with Cambridgeshire County Council, and now acts as Regional Director for a consultancy firm.

Professor Keith SYERS (BSc Agriculture 1960) has been awarded the prestigious International Soil Science Award for 2006. He is currently Dean of Science at Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, Thailand.

Ian WILLIAMS (BSc Naval Architecture 1966) has been made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the 2006 Queen's Birthday Honours List, 'for service to transport through contributions to the improvement of international maritime safety, and to professional organisations'. After graduating with first-class honours, Ian moved to Australia in 1971 and became a leading figure in maritime safety. Since his retirement, he has continued to work on the safety of, and regulations applying to, ocean-going and small vessels in Australia, the UK, Asia, the Pacific, the Caribbean and Africa.

1970s

Douglas BINSTED (BA Modern History 1970) qualified as a solicitor in 1976, and now works as a Higher Courts Advocate and Head of Complex Casework for the Crown Prosecution Service in Cumbria. Douglas is a Rotarian, and is married with five children. Both he and his wife have been foster carers for 10 years.

Dr Brian HUGHES (BSc Chemistry 1972) worked in the chemical industry after University, before joining BNFL where he remained for 18 years until his retirement, having held a variety of positions with the company. Since retirement, he has been Company Secretary and Director of a property management business. He was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1999 and awarded an Honorary DPhil in 2004. Finally retired, he and his wife Margaret have lived in Germany for the last five years, trying to learn the language and loving every minute of it!

1980s

Sandra HUTCHINSON (BA Economics 1983; Graduate Certificate in Education 1984) has written a groundbreaking book on special needs. Published in May this year, *The Good Schools Guide Special Educational Needs* has been described by the writer Nick Hornby as 'practical, fearless, frank, sympathetic and lively' and 'exactly what has been needed for a very long time'.

Diana MORTREUX née HOUNSLOW (BA French 1985) lives in France with her husband and four children, and is Director of the Pas-De-Calais Tourist Board with which she has been working since 1987.

Dr Justin O'BRIEN (BA Politics and East Asian Studies 1989) has recently been appointed as Professor of Corporate Governance at the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, based at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra, Australia.

Ruth SUNDERLAND (BA English 1983; MA English and American Literature 1986) has moved to a new job as Business Editor of

the *Observer*, a national UK Sunday newspaper. She has previously worked as Business Editor on the *Mail on Sunday* and Chief City Correspondent for the *Daily Mail*.

1990s

Rob BEADMAN (BA Financial and Business Economics 1999) married **Kate ARDING (BA History 1999)** in January 2006. Rob is currently working as a Chartered Accountant for Deloitte and Kate is working in Corporate Actions at Barclays Capital – both in London.

James Andrew GIBSON (MEng 1999) married **Rebecca Emma JACKSON (LLB Law 1999)** on 28 July 2006 at All Saints' Church, Brompton-by-Sawdon, North Yorkshire. James works as a Senior Engineer for consultants Faber Maunsell in their Leeds office. Rebecca works for Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council as a Transportation Officer and is currently studying part time for an MSc in Transport Planning at the University of Leeds' Institute for Transport Studies. The wedding was attended by many Newcastle alumni, including Alex Smith (BA History 1999), who was Chief Bridesmaid, and Lloyd Kellock (BArch 2002), who was Best Man. The couple have lived in Barnsley, South Yorkshire since graduation.

David JACKSON (BSc Statistics 1996) and **Rachel BERESFORD (BA Linguistics 1997)** were married in August 2005, after having met whilst studying at the University. They now live in Manchester.

Dr Manzoor MALIK (PhD Agriculture 1995) has recently been appointed as Director-in-Charge of the regional office of the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Dr Suleyman MUYIBI (PhD Civil Engineering 1995) has been promoted to Professor of Bioenvironmental Engineering at the International Islamic University, Malaysia.

James PAICE (BSc Agri-Business Management and Economics 1999) and **Maria SOLARI (BSc Agri-Business Management and Marketing 2000)** met at Newcastle, and were married in January 2006. Several friends from their University days were able to attend the wedding, which was held in Shropshire. They now both live in Cambridgeshire and work for fresh produce companies in the area.

George PHILLIPOS (MSc Marine Engineering 1992) currently works with Queensland Railways in Brisbane, Australia. He has recently written a book entitled *The Men Inside: Chronicles of a Modern Mariner*, which tells a number of fascinating stories about the lives of marines at sea.

Shawki SROUR (MSc Groundwater Engineering 1998) would like to announce the birth of his son Karim, born on 24 February 2006.

Ross Whitelaw (MEng 1995) and **Claire Jordan (BA Combined Studies 1994)** married on 9 September 2006 in a ceremony at the Sage Gateshead music venue which was attended by many of the friends they made at Newcastle University. Ross is a consultant with the Newcastle branch of Royal Haskoning (coastal and rivers section) and Claire is Media Relations Manager with the University's Media and Communications Office. They live in Gosforth.

2000s

Gillian HAMNETT (BA Ancient History 2004) gained a first at Newcastle and then another at Oxford (Master of Studies in Ancient History). She is currently working for the Oxford University Press and is getting married in March 2007.

Jeni HARVEY (BA English Literature 2003) was a runner up in this year's Paul Foot Award for Campaigning Journalism. Her work for the *Middleton and North Manchester Guardian* has been described as 'local newspaper journalism at its most dynamic and courageous'.

Angela LOWES and **Damien WILSON (both BA Politics 2003)** were married on 2 September 2006. They currently live in Southend on Sea, Essex.

Viki TAHMASEBI (BA English Literature 2004) has recently returned from travelling around the world, having visited Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Tijuana and the USA. She is now working in public relations and hopes to build a successful career in the industry.

Lee A Wilkinson (PhD Education 2004) is a nationally certified school psychologist and Professor in Education and Behavioural Studies at Palm Beach Atlantic University in Florida, USA. He has authored a number of articles on school-based consultation practices for professional journals and newsletters in the UK and US, most recently on supporting the inclusion of students with Asperger Syndrome for the journal *Educational Psychology in Practice*.

John WILLIAMS (MPhil Speech 2003) held a fellowship at the University of Melbourne, South Australia in 2003. The fellowship focused partly on the debate surrounding the future of English as a discipline in the twenty-first century.

Obituaries

The University is deeply saddened to announce the deaths of the following Newcastle alumni. Please visit our website at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/news/obituaries where you can read full obituaries of the deceased.

William BETTON (BSc Geography 2004)
Peter Austin COBBETT (LLB 1949)
Michael HAZZLEDINE (BA Fine Art 1961)
Graeme TURNER (BA Economics and Geography 1999)
Frank WARD (BSc Electrical Engineering 1963)

Events

The Development and Alumni Relations Office organises a number of alumni events and reunions each year, and all graduates are encouraged to attend where possible.

For our full events programme, and reviews and photos from previous events, please visit our website at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/events. Please keep us informed of any change to your

postal or e-mail addresses, using the contact details at the bottom of the page, so we can ensure that your event invitations arrive with you in plenty of time.

Events reviews

● Launch of GOLD Network Newcastle:

On 20 July, alumni from across the region were invited to the launch party of our brand new GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) Network at Newcastle's Pitcher & Piano in association with Nigel Wright Recruitment. Attendees were treated to a generous supply of complimentary drinks, and a speech from Tarek Nseir, founder of TH_NK – one of the North East's foremost new

media companies. There was also a prize draw for a bottle of champagne, which was won by Mr Kin Choi (BSc Mathematics and Statistics 2000). Designed exclusively for alumni who have graduated within the last 10 years to meet socially and pool business ideas, the GOLD Network will soon be launching in cities across the UK, so keep an eye on our website for more details.



● Alumni drinks reception in Athens:

An event at the prestigious St George Lycabettus hotel on 5 October marked the re-launch of the Greek branch of the Alumni Association in Athens. Attended by over 250 alumni, and a number of representatives from the University including staff from DARO, the Careers Service, and the Vice-Chancellor himself, this was the first alumni event in Greece for six years. We'd like to thank Venetia Koussia (MPhil Agriculture 1988; PhD 1994) and Danny Zafiris (BSc Applied Science 1958), for all their help in re-launching the Greek branch. The next Athens event is planned for Spring 2007, with plans afoot to roll out activity in other areas of Greece in the coming year.

● Humanities and Social Sciences

Faculty events: In September, the University had the pleasure and the privilege of hosting a reunion for Politics graduates at the House of Commons in London. Around 150 alumni representing five decades of former students attended the event, which was highlighted by Professor Hugh Berrington's Lecture: *The Golden Age That Never Was?*

● 2006 has also seen a number of other successful faculty events hosted by the University. In July, drinks receptions for alumni of both the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape and Newcastle Law School were held at the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts (RSA) in London.

For more information on the above events, as well as those not mentioned here, please visit our website at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/events

Review of Reunion Weekend June 2006

Wine tasting evening

On 2 June, Newcastle graduates met at the Vermont Hotel on the Quayside for an evening of wine tasting, hosted by wine expert Chris Powell from the Newcastle Wine School. Alumni had a chance to sample an array of fine wines and took part in an informal quiz to test their palette.

Reunion Weekend Lecture

Delivered by Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive of the NewcastleGateshead Initiative, this year's Reunion Weekend Lecture was an informative and inspiring insight into the development of culture and tourism in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Afternoon activities

On the Saturday afternoon, alumni were invited on a guided tour to see recent developments on the Quayside; including the award-winning Gateshead Millennium Bridge, the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and the striking Sage Gateshead music and arts centre.

Convocation Lecture

All of Life is Here by Professor John Burn, Head of the University's Institute of Human Genetics, was the most popular sub-event among our alumni (with 250 attendees) and it explored some important advances in medical research, ranging from birth defects to cancer and dementia.



Events diary 2007

Forthcoming events:

20 – 29 January 2007 – The Vice-Chancellor's farewell visit to the Far East. Prior to his retirement in 2007, the Vice-Chancellor will be visiting various locations throughout the Far East, along with other representatives from the University. The visit will include a stop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, between 20–22 January (venue to be confirmed), and an alumni event at the prestigious Tanglin Club in Singapore on 26 January.

1 March 2007 – Great North Museum Event at the Hatton Gallery. Sir Terry Farrell (BArch 1961), architect of the Great North Museum project, will give a public lecture on the history of the Hancock Museum (*Newcastle to Beijing and Back Again*), followed by a special drinks reception at the Hatton Gallery for those involved with the project. Please note that places for the drinks reception are available by invitation only.

30 June 2007 – Reunion Weekend 2007. This year we will be celebrating a number of anniversaries, including the 50th of

Convocation, the 30th of Newcastle Law School, 50th of Computing Science and 25th of Mathematics and Statistics. This year's Reunion Weekend will also feature the 2007 Walton Trophy alumni golf tournament on Sunday 1 July.

10 – 11 July 2007 – Year of 1957 MBBS Private Reunion. Drs Hedley Brown and Brian Posner will be hosting the 50th Anniversary of the year group's graduation in Newcastle. For further details please contact Dr Posner by e-mail at brianposner@blueyonder.co.uk

Provisional dates for your diary:

February 2007 – Newcastle University Business School event in New Delhi; GOLD Network event in Newcastle.

March 2007 – 2nd GOLD Network event in London; Neuroscience event.

April 2007 – School of Historical Studies alumni drinks reception.

May 2007 – 'Past vs Present' student sports day; Newcastle-based MBBS alumni drinks reception; 'International Leavers' event (for graduating international students).

June 2007 – Graduation Job Fair and Graduation Ball.

July 2007 – 3rd Gold Network event in Newcastle.

Check our online calendar for all upcoming events and confirmation of dates and venues as soon as they become available.

Contact us

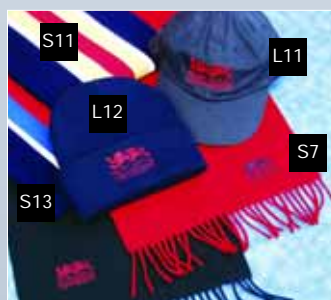
If you need any further information on any of our events, have any suggestions for future events, or would like to recommend a venue, please contact our Events Officer Maria Szpitun by e-mail at m.szpitun@ncl.ac.uk or by phone on 0044 (0) 191 222 3638. You can also visit our website at www.ncl.ac.uk/alumni/events

Wear your Newcastle colours with pride



The Memorabilia Shop has a wide selection of quality merchandise, designed exclusively for Newcastle University. For our full range of products, visit our online store at www.ncl.ac.uk/university-shop which can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Alternatively, you can visit the shop itself on campus.

Official Memorabilia 2006/07



Clothing

- L20* **Newcastle University Rugby Shirt** £42.95
Size options XS, S, M, L, XL or XXL
- L21* **Navy/White T-Shirt** £11.95
Size options XXS, XS, S, M, L, XL or XXL
- L22* **Newcastle University Hoodie** £32.95
Size options XS, S, M, L, XL or XXL

Scarves and Ties

- Scarves and ties are available in general University and faculty colours, please e-mail or telephone if you are unsure of your faculty.
- S1* **Alumni** (Grey or Blue, Silk) £19.95
 - S2* **Lion** (Silk) £19.95
 - S3* **University Shield** (Silk) £19.95
(Navy or Wine)
 - S4* **University Shield** (See S3, Polyester) £9.95
(Navy or Wine)
 - T5* **Broad Stripe** (Polyester) £9.95
 - T4 **General University Tie** (See T11, Polyester)
 - T11* **Humanities and Social Sciences Tie (HASS)** £9.95
 - T12* **Medical Sciences Scarf Tie (MEDICS)** £9.95
 - T13* **Science, Agriculture and Engineering Tie (SAGe)** £9.95
 - S7* **Lambswool Scarves** (100% Lambswool) . . £16.95
(Navy, Charcoal, Silver, Grey and Red)
 - S6 **General University Scarf** £22.95
(Pure Wool also S11/12/13)
 - S11* **Humanities and Social Sciences Scarf (HASS)** £22.95
 - S12 **Medical Sciences Scarf (MEDICS)** £22.95
 - S13* **Science, Agriculture and Engineering Scarf (SAGe)** £22.95

Miscellaneous

- M18* **Newcastle University Monopoly Game** . . £24.95

Jewellery

- J14* **Gold Plated Enamel Cuff Links** £19.95

Parchment Frames

- M26 **Gilt Parchment Frame** (30cm x 40cm) . . . £19.95
- M27* **Black Parchment Frame** (30cm x 40cm) . £19.95

Leisure Wear

- L11* **Baseball Caps, Cotton Drill** £7.95
- L12* **Bronx Wool Hats** £7.95

To order, please either visit our online store, or complete the enclosed order form and return it to:

Memorabilia Shop
Museum of Antiquities
Newcastle University
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU
Tel: 0191 222 7849
Fax: 0191 222 8489

* Indicates item shown in photographs. Items not to scale. All orders subject to availability and price change. An alternative item may be substituted if out of stock. Allow up to six weeks for delivery. Prices correct at time of print October 2006.