



UNIVERSITY  
OF ABERDEEN

# VOICE

CONVERSATION & NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

AUTUMN/WINTER 2011

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# A WORD FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Those of you who follow higher education in the news will know that universities in the UK are entering an unprecedented period of change. In recent months, the Scottish Government has announced that from 2012/13 universities will be allowed to charge students from the rest of the UK higher tuition fees up to a maximum of £9,000 per annum as is the case in England and Wales. On top of that, it has also announced some quite significant proposals to reform the entire post-16 education sector in Scotland.

The reform of the post-16 education system is likely to mean a greater emphasis on increasing retention rates and improving participation from students of all backgrounds, providing an excellent student experience, a greater concentration of research funding on those institutions engaged in world class research, a step change in engagement with industry, and more effective collaboration with other institutions. We need to engage with all these agendas, but we can take confidence from the fact that these are all challenges that we have set for ourselves in our new Strategic Plan and which we are all focused on delivering.

The question of charging fees to UK students from outside Scotland is perhaps a more emotive one. It represents a very difficult choice both for governments and for universities. However, maintaining a fee at the current level for students from the rest of the UK was no longer an option.



**Professor Ian Diamond**  
FBA FRSE AcSS  
Principal and  
Vice-Chancellor

As Scotland's third oldest university, and the fifth most ancient in the UK, the University of Aberdeen has a long track record as a destination of choice for students from other parts of the UK. The fact that we attract a large proportion of our students from across the UK and the rest of the world is part of what makes the experience of studying at Aberdeen special and one of the many reasons we are ranked as one of the world's leading universities. That mix of students is extremely valuable to us and we are committed to making sure that Aberdeen continues to be an option for those non-Scottish students who wish to enjoy the benefits of a four-year Scottish degree.

That is why we have decided that non-Scottish domicile students will pay no more than £27,000 for a four-year degree programme, which is equivalent to the fees for a three year degree in most other parts of the UK. There are also options for well-qualified students to complete a degree in three years should they wish to. We also offer an extensive range of bursaries and scholarships so that, regardless of their background, able students can benefit from all that Aberdeen has to offer – which we believe is an exceptional student experience.

We say exceptional because in the past few years we were one of the first universities in Britain to redesign our curriculum in partnership with students and employers to ensure that Aberdeen graduates are equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century. This has been so well received by employers that the Aberdeen model is now being adopted by other UK and international universities. The 2011 National Student Survey has again ranked Aberdeen as one of the UK's top 20 universities for student satisfaction. And we are equally highly regarded for our excellence in research with the most recent UK wide Research Assessment Exercise stating that 90% of the research conducted at Aberdeen is of international quality.

We can also point to the fact that not only do we have one of the most beautiful medieval campuses in Europe but one that is equipped with the very best in modern facilities for teaching and learning. The University has recently made an unprecedented multi-million pound investment to provide our students with some of the very best facilities you will find anywhere in the UK. These include an Olympic-standard sports village, one of the largest wireless campuses in Europe, a state-of-the-art medical teaching facility on Europe's largest health campus and, just opened this autumn, our fantastic new £57m library.

There is no doubt that both these recent changes in higher education policy bring new challenges for universities in Scotland and Aberdeen is no exception. But I also believe that with change comes opportunity and the Aberdeen family should be assured that we are well placed to take advantage of them. ■



# LIBRARY COMES TO LIFE

Memories of hours spent in the library are likely to loom large when we recall our university days.

But dusty shelves and books precariously balanced on cramped tables in dimly lit corners are now as distant a memory for current University of Aberdeen students as they are for the University's alumni community.

In September the first phase of our new state-of-the-art library opened, providing a 21st century learning and research environment for students, University staff, visitors and the public.

From a giant crater in the ground beside the Fraser Noble and Meston buildings, the University community has watched in eager anticipation as the enormous glass fronted 'cube' started to rise.

It quickly became apparent that this new building would become an iconic new feature not only of King's College Campus but also of the city of Aberdeen.

From the outset it was designed with the wider community in mind and will provide a forum for the public, as well as staff and students, to view the University's extensive Special Collections.

The £57 million project is the largest capital fundraising project yet undertaken by the University and is being brought to fruition as a result of generous support from alumni and private donors around the world, from companies in many sectors of business, and from charitable trusts local and national.

Conceived by Danish architects Schmidt Hammer Lassen as a cube evoking the

ice and light of the north, the sharp, modern design, and striking interior of sweeping contours around an asymmetrical atrium are a far cry from the Queen Mother Library.

For Chris Banks, University Librarian and Director of Library, Special Collections and Museums, overseeing a move of more than 26 miles of books to the new building and elsewhere on campus has proved a challenging but exciting opportunity.

She explains that the process of moving some 400,000 books as part of this first phase while keeping existing services at the Queen Mother Library running as normal caused a few sleepless nights.

“We took over the building from the top down but the services used most frequently by students are on the lower floors so the whole building had to be ready for opening day – there was no margin for the timetable slipping.

“With a little over a month to complete the majority of the move and the installation of furniture and IT systems it was a hectic time but everyone involved in the project really pulled together.

“We closed the top floors of the Queen Mother Library first but of course many of the books were still needed by students so we ran a fetching service which saw library staff running from one site to the other with books in trollies!

“We were totally closed for just two days before opening the new library on September 12th. It was certainly a busy time and not one any of us will forget.”

Chris credits the timely transition to good preparation.

“If you get your planning right and know your dependencies – what must be done in order for the next thing to happen – then you know how things should pan out but of course there is always an element of worry and there were a few sleepless nights.

**THE NEW LIBRARY DWARFS ITS PREDECESSOR – PROVIDING FACILITIES FOR THE 16,000-STRONG STUDENT COMMUNITY.**

“Because you have rehearsed it so many times in your head it is like doing a musical performance whereby you do lots of preparation but know everything still needs to come together for the ‘performance’.”

The new library dwarfs its predecessor – providing facilities for the 16,000-strong student community.

“We will look back fondly on the Queen Mother Library but it was built at a time when Aberdeen had just 5,000 students and the needs of those students were very different.

“To mark the end of an era we had a small party as we closed QML. A number of colleagues had worked there for more than 30 years, one for 36, and there were a lot of fond memories attached to life in the building.

“We spend time reminiscing and sharing stories, including one of a student who was well known to staff for overdue books, who once brought in a box of chickens and let them loose in the library!”

**“THE RESPONSE TO THE NEW LIBRARY HAS BEEN ABSOLUTELY OVERWHELMING AND IT HAS BEEN FANTASTIC TO SEE THE BUILDING USED IN THE WAY THAT WE HAD ALL ENVISAGED,”**

The striking new library has attracted huge interest from the University and wider communities with many people keen not only to see the new surroundings but the spectacular views afforded of the North Sea and the countryside around.

“The response to the new library has been absolutely overwhelming and it has been fantastic to see the building used in the way that we had all envisaged,” says Chris.

“We put a lot of thought into making it an incredibly user-friendly building and even when empty it had a sense of transcendental calm which it has retained now it is open and in use.

“It just felt so right and after two days it felt as though we had been here forever. The new building has restored the library to the centre of the University and it is wonderful to see it being used as a social hub with the café on the ground floor, as well as an area for learning.”

The library will also soon become home to the University’s Special Collections and will host a winter exhibition *Rebels with a cause: The Jacobites and the Global Imagination*, offering an opportunity for the public to access rarely-seen and internationally significant material from the collection in Aberdeen. ■



[www.abdn.ac.uk/library](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library)

**STUDENT PERSPECTIVE:**

*Katherine Duncan, who is studying for an MA in History, explains how the new library has transformed the Aberdeen student experience.*

*“As a fourth-year history student I spend more time in the library than in lectures or seminars,” she says.*

*“I have been watching the new library during construction and I had expected to be impressed by the building itself but I hadn’t anticipated the difference it would make to studying.*

*“It is a building that you really want to go into, so light and you can’t help but look at the views. While the Queen Mother Library served a purpose as a place to read books, this building inspires you.”*

*Katherine says the impressive views from the library also provide a new perspective on Aberdeen.*

*“The Campus is so close to the sea but you wouldn’t know it looking out from the majority of buildings. The new library really helps you to appreciate Aberdeen’s great location.”*

*But she says it is the finish of the library that sets it apart for 21st century study. “It is far more than just a great building to look at, it is a fantastic place to work.*

*“Close attention has been paid to the needs of students with the design so every desk has a plug and room for a laptop as well as your books.*

*“Having an opportunity to work in the new library will really enhance my final year of study. The building has surpassed my expectations and really sets Aberdeen apart in terms of the student experience.”*

# INSPIRATIONAL MUM

## SADDLES UP TO SUPPORT RESEARCH

**Raising money for groundbreaking University research into vasculitis is the goal of a mum-of-two who nearly lost her life to a rare blood vessel disorder.**



When Debbie Ley (pictured above) felt utterly exhausted she blamed it on just having had her second baby while simultaneously studying and overseeing the building of the new family home.

While that would be enough to drain anyone, Debbie's symptoms were actually caused by a relatively rare disorder that just 30 years ago would almost certainly have claimed her life.

The mum-of-two has Wegener's Granulomatosis – a vascular disease which affects one in 20,000 to 30,000 people and causes inflammation of the blood vessels, often affecting multiple organs, and can lead to kidney failure.

Debbie is lucky to be alive – by the time she was admitted to hospital and diagnosed with the autoimmune disease her kidney function was down to 9%.

Consultant nephrologist Dr Lars Erwig, who co-runs the Vasculitis Clinic at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and is an internationally recognised researcher in inflammatory and autoimmune diseases at the University of Aberdeen, said: "When we saw Debbie I thought this was going to be touch and go.

"Thankfully, however, she responded well to treatment. But if it had been a week later, it might have been too late."

Before her hospital admission in January 2009, Debbie's symptoms, apart from crippling exhaustion, were severe nose bleeds, 'crusting' in her nostrils, coughing blood and trouble passing water.

"I'm a really confident, driven, on-the-go person but I'd been feeling really tired and had lost all my energy and enthusiasm," the 38-year-old recalls.

"But 2008 was a busy year – we were building our house, I work nights, I was studying for an SVQ and I was pregnant with my second son Lucas who was born at the end of October."

Debbie went to the doctor before Christmas about her tiredness but the GP blamed it on being post-natal and looking after two children.

Her family took her back to the doctor in January when Debbie was admitted to the hospital's renal unit and had a kidney biopsy before being diagnosed with Wegener's Granulomatosis.

Debbie spent almost two weeks in hospital being given drugs, blood transfusions and a special treatment that removes antibodies from the blood.

Prior to being diagnosed, Debbie had enjoyed mountain biking.

"I tried going out on my mountain bike but found it too hard, but then I bought a new road bike and I've never looked back," she says. "I now do 80 to 100 miles a week on the bike as well as swimming and eating as healthily as I can."

As well ensuring she is in the best of health, Debbie has another goal.

**"I'VE ALREADY RAISED MONEY BY CYCLING 50 MILES FROM AVIEMORE OVER THE LECHT TO BALLATER..."**

"I want to raise money and awareness for research Lars is conducting at the University into Wegener's and other vascular diseases," she adds.

"I've already raised money by cycling 50 miles from Aviemore over the Lecht to Ballater and I've also just entered the Etape Caledonia – an 81-mile cycle taking place next year and funds raised from that will go towards Lars' research."

Anyone wishing to sponsor Debbie should contact: Vicki Corbett at the University's Development Trust on +44 (0)1224 274111 or v.corbett@abdn.ac.uk

The University of Aberdeen Development Trust is a registered charity (SCO02938) established to raise funds to develop and enhance the University of Aberdeen's position as one of the world's leading universities. All donations are used to support students, research and teaching. ■



Debbie's efforts to raise money for research into Wegener's Granulomatosis are very much welcomed by University of Aberdeen researcher Dr Lars Erwig (pictured above).

"It's great to see Debbie doing so well and it's extremely heartening that we are now able to give patients like Debbie a quality of life that wouldn't have been possible 30 years ago," he says.

"Like all medical researchers we always need more funding and are delighted when people like Debbie are keen to help support the groundbreaking research we are doing here in Aberdeen into autoimmune diseases."

The University is one of the few centres in the UK to take a comprehensive approach to autoimmune diseases such as Debbie's.

There are many different types of autoimmune disease – when the immune system overreacts and the body starts attacking its own cells – but those being investigated by Dr Erwig include systemic lupus erythematosus, ANCA associated vasculitis which includes Wegener's Granulomatosis, and large vessel vasculitis including Takayasu's arteritis.

"What we are doing is taking a full scale approach to the problem of autoimmune diseases which unfortunately are not conditions that are as high profile as other diseases, but can be devastating," explains Dr Erwig.

"We are studying the mechanisms of the disease – what causes it, what are the inflammatory changes that occur in the body.

"We are also trying to understand the pathways that drive the disease with the aim of identifying new targets for drugs to treat it.

"Some of our studies are translational – this means that we are taking what we have discovered in the lab and using these techniques to try to help treat patients.

"We are also involved in clinical trials that involve other centres across the world and the aim of many of these is to find treatments that are less toxic and have fewer side effects for diseases like Debbie's.

"We are making strides and with the support of patients like Debbie we will continue to make headway."

# STUDENT PROFILE

# REBECCA WAIN

**MANY OF US WATCH  
THE OLYMPICS IN AWE  
AND THINK 'IF ONLY I  
COULD DO THAT'...**



When Geology student Rebecca Wain watched female modern pentathletes compete for the first time in the 2000 games in Sydney she set her sights on taking up the multi-discipline event.

Little more than a decade later she is one of Britain's elite pentathletes hoping to realise her own Olympic dreams in 2016.

The 20-year-old former Monifieth High School pupil explains how watching Britain's Steph Cooke collect the first gold medal presented for the sport changed the course of her own life.

"I was one of those kids who wanted to try everything," she says, "I belonged to every club I could find and was really into ballet, gymnastics and horse riding.

"Watching the modern pentathletes in the 2000 Games instantly planted the idea in my head that I could do that – I could go to the Olympics and win a medal!"

But with five sports – fencing, swimming, horse riding, shooting and running – to learn, simply competing in the event proved a major challenge.

"I did a lot of running at school, had swimming lessons and went horse riding, holding onto the idea that one day I would do the Modern Pentathlon.

"When I was 15 I got in touch with the Scottish Pentathlon Club and then joined Dundee fencing club. As soon as I tried fencing I was hooked and I was sure then that I'd found the sport for me.

"At that point I still hadn't tried shooting and it did not come quite so naturally! I was a bit concerned that I would never get the hang of it but I stuck at it and practised and have come to really enjoy it.

"I need things to keep me busy and when you have to train in five different sports there is definitely no time to get bored!"

When it came to choosing a university, Aberdeen proved an obvious choice with the newly-opened sports village and a world-class department for Geology and Geography.

Under the guidance of coach Terry Cullen, Rebecca has made the most of the state-of-the-art facilities, training for a minimum of 20 hours per week.

She says good organisation is the key to fitting her punishing training regime around her studies for a BSc Geology and Petroleum Geology. Rebecca, now in her third year, also receives the George K Yule Sports scholarship, without which she says she would not be able to compete at an elite level.

"The George K Yule Sports scholarship is a four-year scholarship and so lasts the full time of my degree and I receive £1,250 per year to help towards the costs of my sport – which with five different disciplines can be expensive!

"The award is conditional on maintaining a high level of academic achievement as well as sporting excellence and



I have been awarded the BP Prize as one of the top students in both first and second year.

"Along with the financial award I receive tremendous support from the sport and exercise team at the University through strength and conditioning gym sessions, physiotherapy, sports massage, body composition testing and have a team of people that I can go to for any help and advice I may need in my sporting career.

**"WITHOUT THE GEORGE K YULE SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP I WOULDN'T BE DOING THE MODERN PENTATHLON NOW AND CERTAINLY NOT AT AN ELITE LEVEL..."**

"I get to meet the other bursars and scholars at the University in seminars covering topics such as massage therapy and nutrition, all of which is hugely beneficial to help broaden our knowledge as athletes. I have also been given the opportunity to meet George my scholarship donor and

**"BECAUSE MY SCHEDULE IS SO BUSY IT HAS BEEN AN ENORMOUS HELP HAVING THE GREAT FACILITIES OF ABERDEEN SPORTS VILLAGE ALL ON ONE SITE..."**

keep in touch with him as he has been extremely interested and enthusiastic about what I do.

"Without the George K Yule Sports Scholarship I wouldn't be doing the Modern Pentathlon now and certainly not at an elite level, as there would be no way that I could afford to live away from home without a job and my schedule really doesn't permit the time for that."

Days are certainly busy for Rebecca, who must juggle lessons and coursework around the training for two to three different sports each day as well as gym sessions and running.

But she says it is the hectic and varied nature of the Modern Pentathlon that keeps her going, and she is currently ranked 9th among the Great Britain Senior Woman and the 5th in the junior age group.

Rebecca now has her sights set firmly on the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

"I've always liked to be busy so a multi-discipline sport really suits me," she adds. "I probably get up earlier than your average student and head to the gym for a couple of hours or go for a run.

"I'll then get ready and head out to University – normally I have two one-hour lectures and a two-three hour practical session. I'll come back from class grab some food and head out for training, doing between one and two hours on two or three of my sports.

"Because my schedule is so busy it has been an enormous help having the great facilities of Aberdeen Sports Village all on one site, especially as I live just across the road. It means I can manage my time really well and fit in as much training as possible."

To achieve her Olympic dream Rebecca plans to dedicate herself full-time to her training once she finishes her degree, before embarking on a career in the energy sector. ■

# CAMPUS NEWS

**THE NEW LIBRARY MAY BE DOMINATING THE GRANITE CITY SKYLINE AND DRAWING ADMIRING COMMENTS FROM NEAR AND FAR – BUT IT IS FAR FROM THE ONLY BUILDING ON CAMPUS NOW BEING REINVENTED TO PROVIDE A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT SUITED TO THE NEEDS AND WORKING STYLES OF STUDENTS AND STAFF TODAY.**

## FRASER NOBLE TO BOAST NEW POSTGRADUATE CENTRE

Modern, flexible, high-quality spaces for an enhanced learning and research environment is the thinking behind Phase 2 of the refurbishment of the Fraser Noble building on the King's College campus.

The first and second floors of the west wing are being completely renovated, providing fully-modernised teaching and research facilities for staff and students, including electronic research laboratory facilities, a dedicated optics laboratory, high and low density IT facilities, and a large open plan Engineering Postgraduate Centre with study facilities for up to 70 postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers. The laser labs on the lower ground floor will also have a makeover.

Building work is due to finish this December, and students and staff will be able to experience the new facilities from February of next year.

The £4 million project on the west wing brings to £13 million the extent of investment in the learning and research environment for engineering, physics and mathematics students and staff. A £9 million first phase, carried out in 2005-2007, refurbished laboratories on the lower first floor, and built a new wing for the Institute of Mathematics.

“Flexibility has been at the forefront of the thinking behind the design of the teaching and research spaces,” says Professor Tom O’Donoghue, Head of the School of Engineering. “The teaching spaces have been designed to be inspiring, multi-functional rooms with the flexibility to suit different disciplines and different teaching methods, including collaborative groupwork. And we’re especially excited about the Engineering Postgraduate Centre – which will give us a spacious, open plan area with modern study booths for students and researchers, and with meeting rooms and a social space too.”

The Fraser Noble building was opened as the Natural Philosophy Department in 1963 by Sir G P Thomson, former Professor of Natural Philosophy at Aberdeen who won the Nobel Prize in Physics for the work that he did here in the late 1920s. The building was named in grateful recognition of the valuable services to the University of Sir Fraser Noble MBE, Principal and Vice Chancellor 1976-1981, who formally re-opened it after extensive refurbishment on 16 November 1988.

## 50/52 COLLEGE BOUNDS – THEIR STORY CONTINUES

What former student would not recall those familiar twin houses on the Chapel side of College Bounds, looking across at the minaret-like towers of Powis Gate?

Most recently, the former Luthuli House was home to the Aberdeen University Student Association before it moved to bigger, refurbished premises in the nearby Butchart Centre – itself vacated with the arrival of the grand new Aberdeen Sports Village.

The distinctive pair of Georgian semi-detached granite houses have served a variety of purposes during the history of the University, housing a number of academic departments, including, at one time, Divinity and Mathematics. Prior to that they had enjoyed the status of professorial manses, serving as genteel residences for University Professors of Mathematics and Greek. Sir Edward Wright, one-time Professor of Mathematics and University Principal, and Archibald Cameron, Regius Professor of Greek, were both 20th century occupants of these elegant homes.

Today, the buildings now known as 50/52 College Bounds are being prepared for a new role. Work started this September to renovate the B-listed houses as one building, upgrading

their interiors to create modern offices and meeting rooms, while retaining the historic fabric of the building. The aim is to retain many of the internal features, including the principal rooms, the original decorative plasterwork, and the fireplaces.

The refurbishment is due to be completed next May, following which the new residents will be the administrative team of the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy, currently located in King’s College, together with academic staff in History of Art and those associated with Scandinavian Studies.

Head of School, Dr Philip Ziegler, says his team are looking forward to moving into their new home. “My colleagues and I are delighted and honoured to become part of the history of these amazing houses,” says Phil. “With their familiar frontage and prominent position in the streetscape of Old Aberdeen, this renovation is not only giving the opportunity to renew their long service to the University, but will also beautifully augment the campus estate to the public eye.”

# BEYOND BOUNDS

## ROWETT NEW BUILD TO EXPAND NUTRITION ROLE ON WORLD STAGE

A new £40 million state-of-the-art research building is the latest development in the evolution of the University's Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health, which will further increase its reputation as a leading international centre of excellence.

Key to the merger in June 2008 of the former Rowett Research Institute and the University of Aberdeen was the creation of a world class centre of research in nutrition and health, with scientists housed together in modern purpose-designed facilities close to other health research facilities and health delivery.

The construction contract will be awarded next year for the five-storey building at Foresterhill, designed by architects Halliday Fraser Munro to provide an ideal, modern, environmentally-excellent, interdisciplinary research environment, including first-class accommodation for members of the public taking part in nutrition research. The building is expected to be ready for occupation late 2014.

Location, they say, is everything. The positioning of the new building at Foresterhill, adjacent to the Institute of Medical Sciences, the Suttie Centre and the Health Sciences Building - and a stone's throw from the

clinical facilities of three hospitals - will create unique benefits for scientists, clinicians and students.

The cost of the new building will be met by the Scottish Government and the sale of the land at Bucksburn on the A96 approach to Aberdeen, where the Institute is currently located and which will become surplus to requirements once the new building is open.

Professor Peter Morgan, Director of the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health and a Vice Principal of the University, believes the new building's unique advantages will help position the Institute at the forefront of tackling not only national problems such as obesity - but also the new world challenge of food security. "Food security is much more than simply how to increase the efficiency of food production," says Peter. "It must also embrace the need to produce healthy and nutritious food, and remove any barriers to accessing a good diet.

"The unique advantages this new building will bring will be a huge asset in achieving our goal."

## STUDENT JOURNOS GEAR UP FOR SCIENCE FESTIVAL

Why is happiness green? Can psychology learn from magic? And is Nessie plain barmy?

Just a flavour of the wise and the wacky - and above all the serious science - waiting to intrigue readers of the second issue of Au Science Magazine.

Editor Heather Doran explains: "There's so much fantastic science that goes on in Aberdeen, we just felt we wanted to share it with a wide audience. The magazine gives students a chance to express what they think is exciting - and with a fresh and very different angle to how science stories are usually written."

The editorial team is part of the student Science Journalism Society which has over 25 undergraduate and postgraduate members studying biological sciences, geology, anthropology and other science disciplines - all sharing a passion for enthusing and engaging a wide audience with science.

"Next year will be a big year for science at Aberdeen," adds Heather. "Having the British Science Festival here on our campus next September will really put down an international marker for the exciting research happening here. The Au team LOVES science and we can't wait to get involved!"

[www.aumag.co.uk](http://www.aumag.co.uk)

## STUDENTS ELECT NEW RECTOR

Well-known businessman Maitland Mackie will be the new Rector of the University.

Dr Mackie said: "I am privileged that the students have chosen me. I am aware from my experience on the University Court that the student body is the principal customer of the University - and the customer is king! It is an honour to be representing the principal customers of the University.

Tessa Birley, President of Aberdeen University Students' Association, added: "I am really delighted - not least because of Maitland's commitment to environmental issues in addition to his knowledge of our University. We are confident he will be a real champion for Aberdeen students."

Maitland graduated with a BSc in Agriculture from the University of Aberdeen in 1958 and MA Hons Economics in 1971, having been chair of the Aberdeen Students' Charities Campaign during his time at University. In 1996 the University awarded Maitland an honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

In his day job, Maitland is Chairman of Mackie's of Scotland, the family-owned ice cream and crisp business. He is also an advocate of renewable energy.

Since Maitland is currently a member of the University Court, an election will now be held for a successor to this Court role.

# NEWS ROUND-UP



## ABERDEEN RESEARCHERS REVEAL STEM CELL TREATMENT FOR OSTEOARTHRITIS

Arthritis Research UK has worked with researchers at Foresterhill and three universities in England on a major experimental tissue engineering initiative which seeks to regenerate bone and cartilage by using stem cells to repair the damaged joint – offering the potential to revolutionise treatment for people in the early stages of the disabling condition osteoarthritis.

At least eight million people in the UK suffer the pain and disability of osteoarthritis, with many having joint replacement operations when the disease has deteriorated to a severe end stage. Treatments for early osteoarthritis are usually limited to painkillers and physiotherapy.

Within five years, researchers aim to treat early osteoarthritis by introducing stem cells into damaged joints as a one-stop day case procedure, delaying or even reducing the need for joint

replacement. Longer term aims include finding a way to 'switch on' stem cells already present in patient's joints, and hopefully developing a bank of universal donor cells for use with any patient, making treatment cheaper and more widely available.

Professor Cosimo De Bari leads the Aberdeen team which also includes Professor David Reid.

"Every patient has their own 'repair kit'," explains Cosimo. "So whereas joint replacement surgery replaces the damaged tissue with engineered metal and plastic, we're trying to assist the human body to repair itself."

"Keyhole and minimally invasive operations for early arthritis have been in development for some years and we propose to improve on these techniques to develop more widely-available treatments. This requires research at all levels of the process, from laboratory to bedside. We're confident that elements of this approach will reach the patient in the operating theatre within the first five years."

## WHY CRAVING CARBS MAY BE IN YOUR GENES AFTER ALL

Among the biggest public health crises facing us today are soaring levels of obesity and binge drinking, particularly in Europe. Now we may be closer to understanding the root causes – thanks to scientists at the University's new Kosterlitz Centre.

The work – published this summer in the *Journal of Neuropsychopharmacology* found a genetic 'switch' - or enhancer - which has remained unchanged for 300 million years. This DNA switch controls the galanin gene, which, when turned on in an area of the brain called the hypothalamus, regulates appetite and thirst. When the team compared different racial groups they found that the switch has mutated over the centuries, and that twice as many Asian people had a weaker variant compared to Europeans.

Research leader Dr Alastair MacKenzie explains: "The switch controls the areas of the brain which allows us to select which foods we would like to eat, and if it is turned on too strongly we are more likely to crave fatty foods and alcohol. For early Europeans a preference for higher calorie content would have been important to survive the tough northern European winters, and people with the weaker switch may not have survived. This suggests that people of European descent have evolved to favour a high fat and alcohol rich diet."

The study also found that changes in the same switch were linked to depression. The Aberdeen scientists worked alongside a team based in the Institute of Psychiatry in London in work which could eventually lead to a whole new generation of antidepressants as well as drugs to reduce cravings for fatty food and alcohol.



## CREATIVITY NEEDED TO TACKLE CONFLICTS OF CONSERVATION

As the human impact on our planet rises, efforts to conserve biodiversity and resources are coming increasingly into conflict with interest groups. The power of arts and sciences working together was one outcome from the international conference *Conservation Conflicts: strategies for coping with a changing world* held in Aberdeen this August.

Organised by ACES - the Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability (an initiative of the University of Aberdeen and the James Hutton Institute) the event brought together leading international experts to explore examples of such conflicts from around the world, including conserving species such as tigers, snow leopard and turtles, establishing and maintaining protected areas such as the Serengeti and Scottish marine protected areas, conflicts over land use such as biofuels or agriculture, and - closer to home - reintroductions and deer management in Scotland.

Professor Steve Redpath of ACES describes the event as a huge success. "We want to find ways to make conservation more effective through new thinking about how conflicts are managed. Two aspects stood out from the considerable feedback we received: first, the diversity of contributions from natural, social sciences and humanities - with case studies from conflicts across the globe; secondly, the combination of arts and sciences. Through Creative Scotland we brought four practising artists to Aberdeen to perform and display their work around conflicts. Delegates told us how this diversity of disciplines and approaches made for an enriching and inspiring experience."

Outcomes of the event include a written review setting the future agenda for studies of conflicts, a book now underway on conflict management, further

ideas to extend the engagement of Creative Scotland, and the possibility of a new centre at Aberdeen to link theory and practice in tackling environmental conflict across the world.

**Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability:**  
[www.aces.ac.uk](http://www.aces.ac.uk)

## ROWETT RESEARCH CAN HELP FEED THE WORLD

Estimates suggest food production may need to increase by up to 50% by 2030 to feed a world population that could reach nine billion by 2050. But how do we do this without putting huge pressure on the finite resources of energy, land and water?

Some of the finest minds in food, health and agricultural research and practice in Scotland met at the University in September to debate key issues around the topic of food security.

Hosted by the University of Aberdeen Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health, the event aimed to find out how Scotland's life science research base could be harnessed to make a significant contribution to the global challenge of food security.

Professor Peter Morgan, Vice-Principal and Director of the Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health and organiser of the event stresses Scotland's long tradition in leading the world in research relevant to food security. "We have a healthy and prosperous farming and food sector, underpinned by research from the University and research institute sectors," says Peter. "We plan to break down the huge topic of food security into research questions and agree the priorities. We will then be able to put together research collaborations that are good for Scotland and good for global food security."

**Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health:** [www.abdn.ac.uk/rowett](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/rowett)

Jean-Michel Cousteau addresses 1,000 marine scientists in Aberdeen



## DIVING DEEP INTO CONTROVERSIES OF OCEAN SCIENCE

Experts with opposing views on some of the most critical issues facing the planet were brought to Aberdeen early autumn for a major international gathering of 1,000 marine scientists, industry experts and policymakers.

The week-long *World Conference on Marine Biodiversity*, organised by the Universities of Aberdeen and St Andrews, provided the platform for lively debate on hot topics including the extinction of marine species, the impact on our oceans of climate change, the results of fishing policies and industry, and the conservation of sea mammals.

French ocean explorer, environmentalist, educator and film producer Jean-Michel Cousteau, son of famous underwater explorer Jacques-Yves Cousteau, kicked off the conference in a hard-hitting session featuring poignant messages from young people who will inherit the oceans, and video footage from some of the world's most challenged marine environments.

Dr Martin Solan from the University of Aberdeen's Oceanlab

co-organised the conference. "There are few more critical issues facing our planet than the health of our marine ecosystems," he stresses. "There are also many differing views both on the interpretation of data, on the seriousness of the challenges, and the actions we should take. We are excited to have this opportunity to bring together scientists, industry experts, interest groups and policymakers from across the world to explore and debate these very controversial issues and hopefully to agree actions we need to take."

Keynote speakers included Professor Shahid Naem of Columbia University New York, Dr Mark Costello of the University of Auckland, Jeff Ardron of the Marine Conservation Biology Institute in Washington, DC, Jóhann Sigurjónsson of the Marine Research Institute, Iceland, and Professor Terry Dawson of the University of Dundee.

The event was supported by ACSEF - Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Future - and by Energetica - the public-private 'energy corridor' between Aberdeen and Peterhead - and with an exhibition sponsored by Shell.



## RURAL LAW GROUP LEADS DEBATE ON TOPICAL ISSUES FOR SCOTLAND

The fast-moving legal issues being encountered in the drive to create more sustainable rural communities attracted over a hundred delegates from the world of law, agriculture, conservation, planning, policy, environment, energy, and other interested sectors to the University early in September.

Outcomes of the two-day *Rural Law Conference: Sustainable Rural Development* are now being written for publication in legal and environmental journals.

The conference addressed key issues for rural lawyers - including agricultural tenancies, crofting, planning, wildlife and environment - from a range of disciplinary perspectives and against the backdrop of CAP reform and the introduction of Scotland's first sustainable land use strategy.

Speakers included Brian Pack, Chair of the Pack Inquiry into the future of agricultural support in Scotland, Nigel Miller, President of the NFU Scotland, the agricultural economist Peter Cook, and Mark Shucksmith, Chair of the inquiry into crofting.

Organisers Dr Aylwin Pillai and Anne-Michelle Slater of the University's Rural Law Research Group were delighted with the success of what turned out to be a very stimulating event, highly relevant to Scotland's future.

**University of Aberdeen Rural Law Research Group:**  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/rural-law](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/rural-law)

## PARTNER OF CHOICE FOR A CHALLENGED ENERGY SECTOR

'Your partner of choice' was the theme for the University's engagement in Offshore Europe 2011, attracting unprecedented interest among the thousands of oil and gas representatives from across

the globe, who flocked to the three-day event early September at Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre.

Academic, research and innovation, and student recruitment staff showcased the University's portfolio of undergraduate and professional development and research opportunities in petroleum geology, exploration and production, all branches of engineering including subsea and safety, economics, oil and gas law and other business studies.

Oil economist Professor Alex Kemp has rarely been out of the media over recent months for his expert contribution to the discussion about the tax issues surrounding North Sea oil and gas, and this autumn for the publication of his two volumes detailing the official history of the North Sea hydrocarbon industry. There was also much discussion around the University's new products for the energy sector including the new energy web portal (see below) and the first issue of *Energeia*, a new magazine highlighting how the University is working with the offshore industry to meet its challenges.

Two new centres of expertise are now engaging with industry to meet the professional development needs of staff in the sector. The University's new Centre for Energy Law is now attracting interest from around the world, and the ExploHUB training centre was officially opened in October to provide professional development for industry geoscientists in the exploration challenges now facing the sector.

**Energy web portal:**  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/energy](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/energy)

**Centre for Energy Law:**  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/energylaw](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/energylaw)

**Energeia magazine:**  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/energy/energeia](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/energy/energeia)

**ExploHUB:**  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/explohub](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/explohub)

## MUSIC PRIZE FINALISTS ARRIVE FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

Spanish composer Marc Garcia Vitoria has won the 2011-12 Aberdeen Music Prize, run in collaboration with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (BBC SSO). The winning composer receives a prize of £5,000 in the form of a commission to write a new piece for the BBC SSO which will subsequently be broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Under the patronage of Dame Evelyn Glennie, the competition celebrates the best new composers in contemporary music, and this year attracted more than 400 entries from 80 countries. The five finalists performed their works at Aberdeen's Cowdray Hall over the weekend of 4-6 November. Other finalists were Shai Cohen from Israel, Zvonimir Nagy from the USA, Christophe Looten from France and Azusa Yomogida from Japan.



Dr Paul Mealor (pictured), who made worldwide news for his original composition performed at this April's Royal Wedding, is the Director of the Aberdeen Music Prize. "Since the Prize was first launched," says Paul, "this search for creative talent has helped to develop Aberdeen's role as one of the major cultural centres in the UK. We are also honoured to have such a well-respected and world-renowned composer, Professor Julian Anderson, as our 2011 judge."

**Aberdeen Music Prize:**  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/aberdeenmusicprize](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/aberdeenmusicprize)



## CURRENT STUDENTS GIVE BIG THUMBS UP FOR ABERDEEN EXPERIENCE

Eighty-eight percent of final year students responding to this year's National Student Survey (NSS) declared themselves satisfied with their experience at Aberdeen, placing the University equal third in Scotland with Stirling, behind St Andrews and Glasgow.

The NSS is a survey of final year undergraduates at UK universities conducted by Ipsos-Mori on behalf of the UK funding councils. This year's response rate at our University was the highest ever at 66%.

Results indicate that Aberdeen outperforms the sector and the Scottish university averages on all themes in the survey. Questions in which we did particularly well included 'staff are good at explaining things' (which 93% of students agreed with), 'I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to' (91% agree), and 88% said that their course was 'intellectually stimulating'.

Students studying Microbiology and those in Film Studies gave their courses 100% - and Medicine came in at 98%. Other courses which scored over 95% for overall quality were History, Sociology, English Studies, Anthropology, Biology, Law, and Physical Geography and Environmental Science. A further nine subjects exceeded the University's overall satisfaction rate of 88%.

**For full results see:**  
[www.unistats.com](http://www.unistats.com)



# KEEP IN TOUCH

**WE ARE GOING ONLINE!**

**We are sending more and more of our updates and communications by email, this will include future editions of the VOICE.**

To ensure you receive future editions and to help us to keep you updated with all of the news, events and alumni benefits on offer please provide us with your email address and inform us of any other changes in your contact details.

Please contact the Alumni Relations office by post:

**Alumni Relations**

University of Aberdeen

Alumni Relations

FREEPOST AB600

Aberdeen

AB24 3ZQ

Or email: [alumni@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@abdn.ac.uk)

Alternatively, you can complete an online update by joining our online community at:

[www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni)



# A MUTUAL HONOUR

**AMONG THOSE BEING RECOGNISED AT OUR GRADUATION CEREMONIES IN NOVEMBER 2011 ARE DAME HAZEL GENN, CHIEF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS, JEREMY HUW WILLIAMS, MRS JENNY SHIRREFFS & DR MICHAEL WYLLIE.**

**Dame Hazel Genn** is an internationally renowned scholar on civil justice and is Dean of Laws, Professor of Socio-Legal Studies and co-director of the Centre for Empirical Legal Studies at University College London. In 2006 Dame Hazel was appointed an Inaugural Commissioner of the new Judicial Appointments Commission established under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 and also served as a member of the Committee on Standards in Public Life from 2003 to 2007. In 2009 she was appointed to the Secretary of State's Advisory Panel on Judicial Diversity. A Fellow of the British Academy, she was awarded the US Law and Society International Prize for distinguished scholarship in 2005. She has also been a member of the Judicial Studies Board for 12 years, contributing to the training for the judiciary at all levels.

A greatly respected religious leader, **Lord Sacks** has been Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth since 1991. Prior to his appointment, Jonathan Sacks was Principal of Jews' College, as well as rabbi of the Golders Green and Marble Arch synagogues. The Chief Rabbi is a prolific and award-winning author. A frequent contributor to radio, television and the national press, he delivered the annual Reith Lectures in 1990. He has also been a visiting professor at several universities in Britain, the United States and Israel. Rabbi Sacks took his seat in the House of Lords in 2009. In 2011 Lord Sacks was awarded the Ladislaus Laszto Ecumenical and Social Concern Award by Ben-Gurion University, a prize which acknowledged his status as "a widely-published theologian and philosopher whose aspirations for truth and mutual respect of all peoples guide his actions".

**Mrs Jenny Shirreffs**, an Aberdeen graduate, has been a prominent volunteer and contributor to the charitable sector in Aberdeen over many years. Child welfare, disability and medical charities, and the arts in Aberdeen have all benefitted from her sustained and dedicated efforts. A Commander of the Order of St John and Deputy Lieutenant of the City of Aberdeen, Mrs Shirreffs' voluntary service to the community was recognised with the MBE in 2009.

Music is represented by the internationally acclaimed Welsh baritone soloist and opera star, **Jeremy Huw Williams**. Since making his debut with Welsh National Opera as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* the celebrated baritone has appeared in some fifty operatic roles. He has given performances at major venues in North and South America, Australia, Hong Kong, and most European countries. A renowned exponent of contemporary music Jeremy Huw Williams studied at St John's College, Cambridge, at the National Opera Studio, and with April Cantelo. Jeremy Huw Williams received the inaugural Sir Geraint Evans Award for his contribution to Welsh music. No stranger to Aberdeen he has also been a popular Visiting Fellow in Performance at the University.

A former pharmacology student of the University with a distinguished career in the pharmaceutical industry is also recognised. **Dr Michael Wyllie**, Director and Founder of Global Pharma, is a double graduate of the University of Aberdeen. He has over 30 years of experience in senior management positions in the pharmaceutical industry. While Director of Biology at Pfizer he received a Pfizer Achievement Award for developing the world's first high throughput screening system. He is Chairman of Glycomar Ltd, the Oban-based marine biotechnology company and a member of the Kosterlitz Centre for Therapeutics advisory board. ■

## November 2011

**Dame Hazel Genn DBE**  
Doctor of Laws

**Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**  
Doctor of Laws

**Mrs Jenny Shirreffs MBE DL CStJ**  
Master of the University

**Jeremy Huw Williams**  
Doctor of Music

**Dr Michael Wyllie**  
Doctor of Science

*In July 2011 leading figures in music, public health, academia and industry were honoured. They included:*

*Sir Duncan Rice, our former Principal and Vice-Chancellor; Richard Thompson, musician and founder member of Fairport Convention; Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work; John Manzoni, President and Chief Executive Officer of Talisman Energy Inc; Roger Williams MBE, former Master of Chapel and Ceremonial Music at the University; Alan Amooore, member of University Court; Professor William Saunders, former Chair of the Dental Schools Council of the United Kingdom; Michael Gazzaniga, Director of the Sage Center, University of California, Santa Barbara; Sir Paul Nurse, President of the Royal Society; and Professor K Srinath Reddy, President of the Public Health Foundation of India.*

# EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS

For further details of the events listed below and a full list of upcoming events organised by the University of Aberdeen visit: [www.abdn.ac.uk/events](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/events) or call: +44 (0)1224 273233

The events detailed below are correct as at November 2011.

<b>African Film Series</b>	Tuesday evenings (September – December) 2011	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/sustainable-international-development">www.abdn.ac.uk/sustainable-international-development</a>
<b>Concert: University of Aberdeen Symphony Orchestra</b>	24 November 2011	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/music/events">www.abdn.ac.uk/music/events</a>
<b>Museum Lecture Series: Street literature and popular song in Scotland from 1750 - 1900</b>	29 November 2011	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum">www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum</a>
<b>Café Controversial: Low prices, high spirits – alcohol misuse</b>	5 December 2011	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/science">www.abdn.ac.uk/science</a>
<b>Museum Lecture Series: Porridge and Politics - how 19th century prison reform in Scotland foreshadowed political centralisation</b>	6 December 2011	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum">www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum</a>
<b>Museum Lecture Series: Renewed Life for Scottish Castles</b>	13 December 2011	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum">www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum</a>
<b>University Transport Studies Group Conference</b>	4 – 6 January 2012	<a href="http://www.utsg.net">www.utsg.net</a>
<b>Museum Lecture Series: Irish Iron Age Bog Bodies</b>	10 January 2012	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum">www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum</a>
<b>Museum Lecture Series: Poetic Performances - wax cylinder recordings of indigenous Siberian storytellers from 1901</b>	17 January 2012	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum">www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum</a>
<b>Museum Lecture Series: Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland - preservation, exploitation and development</b>	24 January 2012	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum">www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum</a>
<b>Museum Lecture Series: Exhibiting Scottish Identity -the 1911 Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry</b>	31 January 2012	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum">www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum</a>
<b>Energy Industries Overview</b>	10 – 12 April 2012	<a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/energyoverview">www.abdn.ac.uk/energyoverview</a>

## EXCLUSIVE EVENTS FOR ALUMNI

For further details visit [www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni) or call +44 (0)1224 273234

<b>Winter Gathering of the General Council, Aberdeen</b>	3 December 2011	<a href="mailto:h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk">h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk</a>
<b>Family Christmas event, Aberdeen</b>	3 December 2011	<a href="mailto:h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk">h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk</a>
<b>Communicating with Confidence, Aberdeen</b>	February 2012	<a href="mailto:h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk">h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk</a>
<b>Alumni gathering, Edinburgh</b>	March 2012	<a href="mailto:h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk">h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk</a>
<b>Baxters Family event</b>	April 2012	<a href="mailto:h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk">h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk</a>
<b>Statutory Meeting of the General Council</b>	April/May 2012	<a href="mailto:h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk">h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk</a>
<b>House of Lords Alumni reception, London</b>	26 April 2012	<a href="mailto:h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk">h.veitch@abdn.ac.uk</a>

## EXHIBITIONS

<b>Elements</b>	A display of material from the University's museum collections exploring the artworks which consider the 'elements' within the environment and landscape from a geological perspective.	Open until January 2012, King's Museum <a href="http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum">www.abdn.ac.uk/kingsmuseum</a>
<b>Images of North</b>	A permanent exhibition displaying paintings of Scotland and the Arctic, Inuit sculptures, and objects relating to life in the Arctic from the University's collections.	James MacKay Hall, King's Conference Centre

# ALUMNI PROFILES

**AN ABSOLUTE PASSION FOR THEATRE AND CULTURE LAUNCHED FAITH LIDDELL ON A CAREER TRAJECTORY THAT HAS CULMINATED IN ONE OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE POSTS IN THE ARTS WORLD.**

# FAITH LIDDELL

For the last four years the University of Aberdeen graduate has been Director of Festivals Edinburgh - an organisation leading the strategic direction of Edinburgh's 12 major festivals to sustain the capital's status as the world's leading festival destination.

It's an impressive - although unsurprising - journey from Faith's years at Old Aberdeen where she graduated in 1987 with a joint honours degree in English and French.

"I'm afraid I spent most of my time doing theatre rather than focussing on my studies - though I did perform in French too!" laughs Faith.

"One of the great things about being in Aberdeen at the time was that you had to create your own culture and that was enormously empowering. We did some great shows and were committed to putting on a lot of Scottish work, something that my course in Scottish literature really informed too.

"We put on a great night of Glasgow poet Tom Leonard's writing and even managed to persuade him to attend. From George Buchanan's Jephthah's Vow in masks in St Machar's Cathedral to What the Butler Saw in my underwear in Aberdeen Art Centre, it was all part of an extended education!"

After leaving Aberdeen, Faith moved to Edinburgh to study for a postgraduate diploma in European Languages and Marketing.

"Almost immediately I began to work in the arts, beginning in the bar at the Traverse Theatre and working my way up to Edinburgh Festival Fringe Marketing Manager," says Faith.

"Since then I've travelled and worked abroad, run a Fringe Venue and became Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

The experienced director, producer and project manager has worked in key strategic and creative roles across theatre, literature, music, film and visual arts.

"The common thread between all of these things is the connections I've created between artists, organisations, stakeholders and funders. Edinburgh's festivals are a powerhouse of ideas, one of Scotland's leading brands, an incredible force of pride for residents and an epicentre of pilgrimage for tourists and artists. I couldn't have found a better home."

The Edinburgh festivals initially employed Faith to work two days a week tackling what they had identified as a serious challenge - maintaining their position as a pre-eminent festival city in the face of competition from emerging festival cities around the world.

"Now, four years on, our turnover has increased from £30,000 to over £1m per annum and our team has grown to eight staff, all working directly with our festival colleagues to devise and implement major collaborative projects that develop audiences, deliver growth and help the Festivals remain competitive," says Faith.

Could there be a typical day?

"It depends on the time of the year. This last winter I spent quite some time working with cultural producers and governments in Brazil, India, the US and Canada on our ambitions for 2012, when the greatest sporting event in the world, the London Olympics, coincide

with the greatest cultural show in the planet, our own Edinburgh Festivals," Faith explains.

"But in August things can feel even more hectic. A typical day could involve a joint briefing with Scotland's Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, taking Brazilian producers to meet festival colleagues, three exhibition openings - in the same hour! - and the opportunity to meet John Malkovich in person, which I sadly had to decline, due to previous commitments."

Amidst the high octane lifestyle, Faith fondly remembers a slightly less frenetic pace at Aberdeen.

"I did enjoy revising between snoozes at the height of summer in Old College Quad," Faith adds. It's a great university that has a real and committed relationship with the city it inhabits. ■

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**"...THIS LAST WINTER I SPENT QUITE SOME TIME WORKING WITH CULTURAL PRODUCERS AND GOVERNMENTS IN BRAZIL, INDIA, THE US AND CANADA ON OUR AMBITIONS FOR 2012..."**

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## ALUMNI PROFILE: SHEILA MACKENZIE

**WAR-TIME STUDENT SHEILA MACKENZIE WAS READING FRENCH AND GERMAN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN WHEN A LETTER ARRIVED IN 1943 SUMMONING HER FOR INTERVIEW AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE.**

“I’d never even been over the border before as travel was limited because of difficulties with Herr Hitler,” recalls the 88-year-old, originally from Inverness.

She didn’t know it then but Sheila was to join an extraordinary and top-secret band of extremely talented codebreakers now credited with shortening World War Two by at least two years. It was only after the war that the codebreakers really became aware of the significance of their work.

“After my interview I received another letter, containing a telephone number, directing me to report to Bletchley,” says Sheila, who had just completed the second year of her honours degree at Aberdeen at the time.

“When I got there I had to use the telephone, ring the number and give my name. A voice then said: ‘Miss Mackenzie we are expecting you and a car will fetch you’. I still had absolutely no idea what I was going to do.”

**SHE DIDN’T KNOW IT THEN BUT SHEILA WAS TO JOIN AN EXTRAORDINARY AND TOP-SECRET BAND OF EXTREMELY TALENTED CODEBREAKERS NOW CREDITED WITH SHORTENING WORLD WAR TWO BY AT LEAST TWO YEARS.**



Sheila Lawn (nee Mackenzie) and her husband Oliver meet HM The Queen at Bletchley Park

Bletchley Park was, of course, Britain’s main decryption unit, perhaps more widely known for cracking the supposedly unbreakable Enigma codes - the backbone of German military and intelligence communications.

“I had to sign the Official Secrets Act and then I discovered what I was to do,” says Sheila, who was among veterans who met the Queen as she recently unveiled a memorial at Bletchley.

“I was given the encoded texts of ‘hand codes’ which had been intercepted by ‘Y’ listening stations, and which had been sent by German Coastal Batteries and Radar Stations based along the Dutch, Belgian, French and Mediterranean coasts. These texts arrived at Bletchley by teleprinter or were brought by chaps on motorcycles.

“My job was to decode and translate these and then put them on a pile on my desk for study elsewhere. I have no idea what that study involved.”

Everything was so clandestine that no-one discussed their work.

Even when Sheila met her future husband-to-be - Oliver Lawn, a first class Cambridge mathematician, who was among the team who helped crack the Enigma code - the couple kept their counsel.

“We could not speak about what we had done. We were instructed to forget what we did and we took that very seriously,” explains Sheila.

“In fact we did not speak to each other about it until some 35 years later when we knew that the secrecy had been lifted although we didn’t really say very much.

“It was really only when we went back to Bletchley 50 years later that we spoke more about it as it brought back memories.

“You assumed you were doing a great deal of useful work and there really were some eminent and clever people around but you just got on with things to the best of your ability,” says Sheila.

After the war Sheila returned to Aberdeen where she graduated with an MA degree in General Subjects in 1946.

“I very much enjoyed my studies in Aberdeen although you were under a lot of restrictions during the war,” adds Sheila, who together with Oliver gives talks about Bletchley Park.

“You couldn’t take a walk along the beach because it was mined and if it was a clear night and the moon was shining it was easy to find your way back to your digs, but there was also a likelihood that we would come under attack.

“Nevertheless we had a good time at University.” ■

# ALUMNI NEWS

## LET'S GET ENGAGED - BECOME AN ALUMNI AMBASSADOR

We are currently in touch with over 74,000 alumni, living in 150 countries around the world.

A strong network of Ambassadors and Contacts is one of the foundations of our alumni activity, encouraging links with the University worldwide, helping us achieve our strategic aims and positioning the University as a global institution.

The role of Alumni Ambassador requires a significant level of commitment. Our Ambassadors assist with many things including organising local events, supporting local student recruitment activity, creating social networks and staying in touch with Alumni in the area.

**David Baxter, (Study Abroad '06)**, says: "Not only has being Alumni Ambassador allowed me to reconnect with the University, it has opened me up to new and exciting opportunities in New York. It has served as a tremendous networking tool that has helped me both personally and professionally. I look forward to continuing to blend Aberdeen with New York over the next year."

If you would like to share your experience and stay engaged with fellow alumni living in your area, then the role of Alumni Ambassador or Alumni Contact may be for you.

For full details about our Ambassador Programme, please see our website:  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni) or  
email: [alumni@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@abdn.ac.uk)

## MAKING LIFELONG CONNECTIONS - CAREER MENTORING

"It is somewhat of a cliché, but I wanted to give something back," says Willie Donald (BSc, 1974) about the University's new Career Mentoring Programme which aims to link current students with alumni who will share their professional experience and expertise.

The initiative, jointly managed by the Alumni Relations Office and the Careers Service, is designed to help students make contacts in specific employment areas and to provide them with an opportunity to enhance their professional skills and employment knowledge outside of their academic study.

The programme also provides a number of benefits to the mentors including:

- Contributing to the professional development of future colleagues
- Becoming involved with the University in a practical role
- Enhancing their own professional development through new skills
- Sharing the value of their experience

Both mentors and mentees are supported by staff from the University of Aberdeen throughout the four month Programme which runs twice a year.

The Programme is an exciting opportunity for alumni to engage with our current students and offer invaluable first-hand advice and guidance.

For more information about the Programme and to find out how to apply visit our website:  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni/mentoring/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni/mentoring/)

## MENTOR PROFILE



After a long career in corporate life and now running my own Executive Coaching and Performance Management Consultancy I felt that I could help young people heading out into the working world.

Working with my mentee was challenging as I quickly learned that I was dealing with one focused and ambitious person.

We met twice a month, either in person, or most of the time using the Skype video conferencing facility.

My mentee was brilliant, accepting advice when appropriate, challenging when it was correct to do so, and the result of that laser sharp focus was an appointment to the Graduate Training Programme of a global internet company. Clearly this has been a major achievement for the mentee, and naturally I am delighted. The whole exercise was also fun, and I've also got a new friend whose career development will be a joy to follow.

**Willie Donald (BSc, 1974)**

**BRITISH SCIENCE FESTIVAL**

**ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND**

Friday 7 - Sunday 9 September 2012

As part of the British Science Festival 2012 we would like to invite you back to campus for an exclusive Alumni reunion weekend.

For further information please visit the website:  
[www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni-weekend](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/alumni-weekend)

**University of Aberdeen Alumni:  
LET'S GET ENGAGED**

british science festival  
ABERDEEN  
4-9 SEPT 2012



## ALUMNI EVENTS ROUND-UP

### CROMARTY DOLPHIN WATCHING TRIP

Graduates heading out into the Moray Firth for the annual Dolphin watching trip, ahead of their tour of the Lighthouse Field station and dinner at nearby Sutor Creek.



### FLAVOURS OF FOCHABERS

Our alumni were treated to a factory tour, cookery demonstration and tasting session at the wonderful Baxters Highland Village. In this picture, Head Chef John gives alumni a demonstration on how to make Scallop and Sweet Pea Risotto.



### GLASGOW PIPING SESSION

Aberdeen graduates Anne Scott (MA 1985), Tessa Birley (MA 2011), Sean O'Rourke (MA 2011), try their hands at the bagpipes, at a recent informal gathering at the National Piping Centre, Glasgow.



### ALUMNI DINNER, HONG KONG

Principal Diamond addressing Alumni on his recent trip to Hong Kong.



### ALUMNI RECEPTIONS IN BOSTON, NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA AND WASHINGTON

Graduates enjoying the opportunity to network and reminisce with Professor Bill Naphy, Chair in History at the University, and Dr Alistair Mair at the recent alumni gatherings in the USA.



### ALUMNI RECEPTION, LAGOS

Aberdeen graduates catching up at a recent informal gathering in Lagos.



### RETURN TO THE BURN

Big birthday on the horizon? A family celebration? Perhaps an eagerly-anticipated reunion with former classmates? Or just a quiet weekend away from the bustle of the daily grind?

Whatever the occasion, we all know the importance of finding the right venue – and if that venue conjures up happy memories then so much the better.

Many Aberdeen alumni will have such memories of The Burn, recalling a gem nestling in unspoilt Angus countryside, with all the genteel charm of a mansion house dating back to the 18th century, but now modernised to provide the comforts we expect today.

The fun of a murder mystery, plentiful home-cooked suppers, sparkling company, long days in the fresh air – or perhaps just the time to chill? It could be time to pay a return visit, suggests Andrew Brown, Aberdeen law graduate and practising QC who now chairs the estate's management committee.

"I'm fortunate to have had a long connection with The Burn," says Andrew. "My father took Medieval History students there from Glasgow for many years. I went as a child and then experienced it officially when a student at Aberdeen. Later, it was a magnificent venue for my 40th birthday and subsequent occasions, all of which involved friends from 1980s Aberdeen."

The Burn was gifted in 1948 to Goodenough College in London by the late Mr and Mrs Herbert Russell in memory of their son, James, who was killed in action in Italy in 1944 aged 21. It became a holiday and study centre for students, graduates and academic staff, allowing them to take advantage of the 190 acres of park and woodland on the banks of the River North Esk and the excellent accommodation at low cost, subsidised by the Russell legacy.

Academic 'away-time' remains the core business, but The Burn is increasingly appealing to groups and families for other types of breaks. The estate offers fishing, beautiful river walks, lawns for family games, as well as tennis and croquet. It is ideal for children.

"Like me, many Aberdeen graduates will have had a tremendous time at The Burn," enthuses Andrew. "And the great thing is – it is still very much there, refreshed and refurbished, but with its charm and appeal intact. Alumni and university staff can rekindle those memories and will, I am sure, only have a tremendous time again. The Burn would love to welcome them back!"

[www.goodenough.ac.uk/the\\_burn0.html](http://www.goodenough.ac.uk/the_burn0.html)

## APPOINTMENT OF NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBER TO THE UNIVERSITY COURT AND MEMBER OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

The University of Aberdeen is one of the UK's oldest and most distinguished universities and is ranked as one of the Top 150 universities in the world. It has circa 16,000 students and annual turnover in excess of £215million. The University is committed to further building on its history and international reputation for teaching and research excellence. The Court (the governing body of the University) is seeking to appoint an Independent Governor who can contribute to its achieving that ambition. It is also seeking to appoint a new member to its Audit Committee. We are committed to equality and diversity and we would welcome applications for these positions that reflect the diversity of our University community.

### Non-Executive Member of Court

Expressions of interest to this position are invited from individuals with substantial leadership responsibility and experience of board level governance who are keen to support an internationally competitive research based university. Interest would be particularly welcome at this time from those with experience in Property Management/ Construction and applicants able to enhance the diversity of Court. The expected time commitment is up to 15 days per year including attendance (in person or by teleconference) at four meetings of the Court per year.

### Audit Committee Member

Applicants for this position should possess recent and relevant experience and an ability and willingness to challenge and probe in areas relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of the University's risk management, control and governance arrangements. It is not necessary for this experience to have been gained within a financial or audit environment. The expected time commitment is attendance at five meetings of the Committee per year.

Both appointments are for 3 years, and are unremunerated (expenses are paid).

To express an interest in either role, please send a full CV and supporting statement by:

**Friday 9 December 2011**

to

**Steve Cannon**  
**Secretary to the University**  
**King's College**  
**Aberdeen AB24 3 FX**

or to

**s.cannon@abdn.ac.uk**

Informal queries should also be directed to the University Secretary. Please note that while there is a closing date, we will be keen to receive nominations or expressions of interest after that date for future potential vacancies.

For further information visit: [www.abdn.ac.uk/court-recruitment](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/court-recruitment)

## GENERAL COUNCIL

The next Statutory Meeting of the General Council will be held on Saturday 3 December 2011 in King's College Conference Centre at 11am. The meeting will be followed by lunch in the Linklater Rooms at 12.30pm.

In 2012 the General Council will elect three assessors to the University court, influencing the management of the University at the highest level.

If more than three nominations are received, you will be invited to vote for the three new Assessors in a postal ballot.

For nominations papers, contact [gencouncil@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:gencouncil@abdn.ac.uk), or call +44 (0) 1224 273234.

## LET'S GET SOCIAL



Find us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/AberdeenUniversityAlumni](http://www.facebook.com/AberdeenUniversityAlumni)  
 or join our group on LinkedIn:  
**University of Aberdeen - Alumni Relations (Official Page)**

### *Alumni news: Apology*

*We apologise for incorrectly printing the notice of the death of Jonathan Charles Brian Foster (MA 59) and John Eric Andrew Bartholomew (MA 77) in the previous edition of the Voice Magazine. We are sorry for any distress this may have caused to the individuals, their family and friends.*

# Credit Where it's Due.



The University's Affinity Credit Card is available to any UK resident over the age of 18. Since it became available to alumni and friends many years ago it has helped to generate tens of thousands of pounds in commission in support of University projects. We wish to thank everyone who has supported the University in this way. The credit card is issued by MBNA Europe Bank Limited and offers all the features you would expect from a premium service credit card.

To apply for this card, please call:  
**0800 028 2440** and quote **31CVQKJY**.



# TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## ABERDEEN FUTURE FUND

**Through the generous contributions from our alumni community, the Aberdeen Future Fund provides important support to projects that enhance the Aberdeen student experience – today and in the future.**

Last year our alumni raised a record-breaking £655,000 for the Aberdeen Future Fund.

This generosity has helped to fund:

- Undergraduate scholarships
- Equipment for a wide range of clubs and societies
- Sports bursaries
- The Alumni floor of the new library
- Medical research at the University

With your help, we would like to increase this investment in improving our student experience. If every graduate gave £20 we would raise £1.3 million.



Please consider making a gift to the Aberdeen Future Fund – donate and make a difference.

To donate online please go to:  
**[www.abdn.ac.uk/giving/annualfund](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/giving/annualfund)**

Alternatively, please complete the enclosed donation form.

Your support is very important to our students.  
**Thank You.**

University of Aberdeen Development Trust,  
Registered Charity No. SC002938



**UNIVERSITY  
OF ABERDEEN**