TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT INTERNATIONALISATION
From Arctic expeditions to the study of ice

SHAPING CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY
Nobel Prize winner
Professor Camille Parmesan

EASTERN PROMISE
for University field trips

THE HYDROGRAPHIC ACADEMY
Studying for degrees in the middle of the ocean
WELCOME

A true story: While on a recent holiday in Central America, I met a woman near Lake Nicaragua – a political and environmental campaigner – who spoke in glowing terms of our School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, and of some of the respected academics therein. It was a very personal and affirming reminder that it doesn’t take six degrees of separation to tack your way back to Plymouth from even the remotest parts of the world.

And that is testament to the international reach and impact of the work the University does, whether it is leading consortia of research partners; providing education and training opportunities in other territories; addressing overseas conferences and organisations (such as the UN, no less); and offering Plymouth students the chance to extend their sphere of understanding with field trips and exchange programmes.

In this edition of CONNECT, you’ll find a number of stories that pay tribute to the University’s commitment to internationalisation – from the Hydrographic Academy to the Talent Hub, via field trips and research projects with SoGEES. And in this summer of sport, we speak to Professor Kevin Jefferys about his research into the Olympic Games and its political and cultural impact.

Enjoy the issue.

Andrew Merrington
Editor

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR VICE-CHANCELLOR

We are a bold and enterprising university that is really going places thanks to our research, our innovation, and our student experience. That has been the message in recent weeks from a number of independent sources.

The Times Higher Education, for example, ranked us at 60th in their inaugural top 100 universities under the age of 50 list, and 10th in the UK alongside the likes of Warwick, York and Lancaster. They also awarded a prestigious Leadership and Management Award to the Faculty of Health, Education and Society for the collaborative manner in which they run their placement programme. And then there was our ranking at number 2 in the annual People and Planet Green League, maintaining Plymouth’s reputation as the overall best performing institution.

What makes us stand out as a modern university is the way we are so adept at translating the research excellence, the strong links with business, and the innovative partnership with organisations, both domestically and overseas, into opportunities to enhance the student experience. This edition of CONNECT features many such examples – from Talent Hub to the Hydrographic Academy; field trips to international research partnerships – all are helping our students to become the most engaged, enterprising and employable graduates in the world.

I hope you enjoy this issue of CONNECT and please continue to share your good news stories so that we can all celebrate the excellent work of our University.

Professor Wendy Purcell
Vice-Chancellor
TALENT HUB GRADUATING WITH HONOURS

It started life as a Higher Education Academy-sponsored pilot project with 16 students testing a work-based learning consultancy model.

Two years on, and just 12 months since its official launch, Talent Hub has recorded over 1,700 student experiences; provided 650 stage 1 students with work-based learning opportunities and contributed an estimated £174,000 worth of community consultation in the process; taken on three Entrepreneurs in Residence to work intensively with students; secured 200 undergraduate placements enabling employability skills development; connected with the Plymouth Business School (PBS) alumni through a range of value adding activities; offered a twilight language programme; and delivered an enterprise series to local schools through its widening participation team. With an annual report like that, is it any wonder that the PBS-based team is now set to open its doors – and its range of innovative entrepreneurial services – to students across the University?!

“Talent Hub brings together a whole range of student experience services – placements, careers advice, co-curricular programmes, language services, alumni engagement and widening participation,” said Hilary Duckett, Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning in the Business School, and strategic lead for the team. “It is an integrated service devoted to developing and delivering a range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities that enhance life skills, employability and the student experience. These services are now actively promoted at preview and open days.”

Among these value-added options are the Professional Development Series, a plethora of free courses and workshops which students can participate in as streamed activities, in areas such as internationalisation, leadership, sustainability and enterprise, or selected ‘off the shelf’ as an eclectic mix. Participants might, for example, buddy up with an international student in a tandem Mandarin language club; attend a one-to-one surgery with a business expert; undertake specific leadership training; or undergo an intensive session in skills such as managing a team, negotiating, or making an impact in interviews.

But as Hilary said, Talent Hub is also leading curriculum change through provision of work-based learning opportunities, such as its Inspiring Futures programme of in-study consultancy. She said: “We trialled Inspiring Futures in 2010 with 16 students in the School of Management. This year, we gave 641 of them the chance to work on live consultancy projects with 38 organisations across the public, private and 3rd sector, including global computer giant Apple, Plymouth City Council, and the Rural Community Link Project.”

Inspiring Futures generated 116 consultancy reports, with an estimated value to the local economy of £174,000 – significantly benefiting a number of organisations that would otherwise not have been able to afford consultancy expertise. Associate Professor Mike Leat, of the School of Management, paid tribute to its impact, saying: “Almost without exception, these students – who had been thrust into a commercial environment of which they had little or no experience – learned an enormous amount and developed really significant levels of self-confidence. It was about as close as you can get to simulating consultancy.”

That union of academic study and practical experience is also personified in Talent Hub’s three Entrepreneurs in Residence – Dr Simon Brown, the former chair of Enterprise Educators UK; social enterprise expert and adviser Gareth Hart; and Randolph Gratton, Marketing and Business Development Director at the National Marine Aquarium. Between them, they have mentored students, provided guidance and input into start-up businesses, and in Simon’s case, offered virtual support through the production of his Enterprising Mind podcasts, and his mentoring of the Entrepreneurs Society.

He said: “What is being developed by David (Professor Wheeler) and Hilary is unique – I have not seen anything as ambitious around the country – and it is a fantastic resource for the University. I have been able to share my expertise and introduce colleagues to networks, which is one of the most important things an Entrepreneur in Residence can do.”

With demand for work placements continuing to rise, the Talent Hub is also exploring ways at generating new, interdisciplinary opportunities for students – such as six funded internships with the National Marine Aquarium, and a project entitled The Inspiring Futures Community.
Interest Company. Ian Deamer, Human Resources Lecturer, and lead for placements, said: “We need to take a sustainable approach to providing placements, looking at flexible arrangements, shorter projects and alternatives to just packing our students off to employers for a year. With the proposed Community Interest Company, we offer nine students the chance to become a consultancy company, working with customers, pitching for work, and delivering live projects. At the end of the year we recruit a new team – and clearly this is a model that has potential right across the University. This year we will be employing students from the Business School, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Science & Technology in this exciting venture.”

From September, Talent Hub becomes PBS Gateway, reflecting an even closer integration with the Student Gateway. It will also be working closely with the Plymouth-led Social Enterprise University Enterprise Network. Hilary said: “We actively promote Students in Free Enterprise, FLUX and the Plymouth Award, so we are already joined up with our Gateway colleagues. Next year, the services will be even closer aligned, and we will continue to innovate, and use our connections to develop new opportunities for our students – across the University.”
CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH ‘ON ICE’ AT PLYMOUTH

A high-profile internationalisation project that has brought together 12 talented PhD students in a bid to develop a more holistic picture of climate change has received Plymouth’s piece of the puzzle – served on ice.
The Changing Arctic and Sub Arctic Environment (CASE) programme sees students from institutions in Norway, Germany, France, the Netherlands – and two from the University – team up to conduct joint research and learn from the specialist expertise of each partner.

In June it was Plymouth’s turn to host the Euro 3m FP7 project team, and provide an insight into its patented ‘biomarker’ technique, which uses the principles of chemistry to analyse sediment samples recovered from the Arctic Circle. The students were also tutored on the importance of communication and working with the media to publicise science.

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Professor Simon Belt, Associate Head of the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, played a fundamental role in Plymouth’s involvement with the EU Initial Training Network programme, and orchestrated the week’s activities. He said: “Each of the institutions involved brings to the table a particular expertise in the climate change story; collectively we can help students develop a more holistic picture.

‘At Plymouth, we’ve been helping them to recreate ‘the ice story’, using chemical tracers like fingerprint analysis, looking for evidence of sea ice in the North Atlantic. We invented the technique, and this is their opportunity to tap into that expertise.

“It also serves as a very useful demonstration of the hard work that goes on behind the scenes, and behind the data that you see in presentations. Together, we’re reconstructing past climates so that we can understand what might happen in the future.”

Internationalisation is at the heart of CASE, with each of the dozen students based outside of their home country, including Plymouth’s pair of Patricia Cabedo Sanz and Alba Navarro Rodriguez who both hail from Spain.

Simon said: “We are challenging the students to learn new skills and experience different arenas, so that they can develop a much better understanding of what contemporaries in their field might be doing, which will prepare them for integrated projects.”

Gesa Milzer, a German student studying at the University of Bordeaux and CNRS, echoed those sentiments. She said: “Through the programme I have been able to experience different countries, universities, cultures, and mental approaches to dealing with the work – it has been very challenging and interesting. The good thing is that we all get along well and socialise together, so that makes it easier to work in a collaborative way.”

It is the fifth time the cohort has come together since its launch in late 2010, including a cruise to Svalbard where the students were able to gather water samples. Frazer Davies, studying at Vu Amsterdam, but originally from Coventry, said: “The work that Plymouth does here is new and in a field that I’d not previously had any experience with. I’d read about the theory but to have gained practical understanding will help greatly in the future.”

And Plymouth’s Patricia Cabedo Sanz, by way of Valencia, said that the media training had helped the group to understand some of the demands of the press, and consider the way they communicate.

She added: “The programme has done many things for me – it has enabled me to improve my English, to experience new institutions and their different specialities, and to learn practical skills. It has also given us the chance to meet Simon and learn from the expertise here at Plymouth.”

The praise is echoed by all of the students, who have clearly relished the opportunity to work alongside such a renowned academic in his field.

“IT IS EXCELLENT RECOGNITION FOR PLYMOUTH,” said the man himself. “We have the equipment and the know-how in this specialist area, and together with our partner institutions, we can help develop a more rounded and technically-prepared next generation of climate change scientist.”
EASTERN PROMISE FOR UNIVERSITY FIELD COURSES

Picture the scene: high up in the mountains of western Malaysia, Plymouth University students and staff are watching primary schoolchildren enacting the courtship of fireflies, in celebration of ‘Earth Hour’.

As the applause fades away, a loudspeaker carries the words of Penang’s Minister for Environment across the primary rainforest, as he pledges to do more to curb the country’s greenhouse gas emissions. For these budding environmental scientists it is a formative moment, and an insight into the kind of challenges that await them on the global stage.

The School of Geography, Earth, and Environmental Sciences has been running the annual field trip to Malaysia for 15 years, and it has succeeded in establishing strong links with a number of organisations including the University of Malaya and the Forest Research Institute.

And according to Associate Professor Paul Lunt, it has provided students with an invaluable insight into the types of environmental challenges that are part and parcel of the international scene. He said: “BSc (Hons) Environmental Science at Plymouth has been running for almost 40 years. It was one of the first degree courses in Europe to link the science of the environment with an understanding of legal, social and economic subject disciplines, and in the post-industrial era of the 1970s this interdisciplinary approach was vital to solving our home grown problems of environmental pollution and land reclamation.

“The advent of globalisation has seen the exportation of traditional heavy industries along with some of those historical pollution problems, and today’s environmental science graduates need to have an international perspective to provide solutions to global problems such as biodiversity loss, climate change, energy supply, and food and water security. Such problems need scientists who can work with all aspect of commerce and groups within society.”

More than 60 students travelled to Malaysia this year – one of the most biodiverse countries in the world – spending three weeks in a variety of locations including Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Selangor and the tiny British-built hill station at Fraser’s Hill. There they worked on field projects relating to spiders, the forest canopy, and fungi, building on the successful legacy of past research into water pollution.
impacts associated with landfill and forest soil nutrient dynamics and erosion.

Paul said: “The challenge for our overseas expeditions is to train environmental students who can provide science-based solutions to global environmental problems. Plymouth can be rightly proud of having the first truly interdisciplinary environmental science course to provide students with the training required to meet the demands of sustainable development.”

The success of the Malaysia trip has paved the way for a further strengthening of the internationalisation agenda in the school with new opportunities created in Malta, China and Hong Kong in the past six years, and the possibility of another in Borneo.

Dr Charlotte Braungardt, Programme Manager of the BSc (Hons) Environmental Science, has developed new links with Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, China, and City University of Hong Kong. Every year students from each institution work on joint research projects, while Plymouth also hosts Sun Yat-sen students in Cornwall.

Charlotte said: “On our fifth joint field course since its inception in 2008, 26 students travelled to China this year and worked alongside their international contemporaries on a number of projects, including air quality research and a study on the health of mangroves, which will inform the conservation management strategies in a Ramsar site.

“I always feel that our exchange is ‘priceless’ at a personal level, providing valuable experience and insight into a different culture, work ethic and way of life. Through field courses such as these, we are helping our students to undertake a voyage of discovery on every level, combining cultural learning with the development of their scientific knowledge and professional skills.”

The philosophy behind bringing students from different cultures together within a work context is addressed in an article by Charlotte and Dr Simon Ingram in the Geography, Earth and Environmental Services journal Planet, published in July 2012, entitled ‘Justifying long-haul field courses: the role of cultural learning’ http://gees.ac.uk/pubs/planet/index.htm

More details of how the University is supporting internationalisation can be found in a new brochure available from the International Office.
FEATURING: THE HYDROGRAPHIC ACADEMY

"I have quite literally searched the world for an institution that offers this kind of tertiary education, and from Australia to Europe I have been unsuccessful so thank you for your efforts! It’s a huge step in the right direction!"

Hydrographic Academy student

OCEANS OF POTENTIAL FOR NEW HYDROGRAPHIC ACADEMY

Dr Richard Thain
Dr Richard Thain rubs the jetlag from his eyes and reflects upon the remarkable progress of the Hydrographic Academy in the 18 months it has taken to travel from blueprint to green-light.

Just back from showcasing the academy to the International Hydrographic Organisation in Buenos Aires – an important exercise in ‘winning hearts and minds’ – Richard is preparing for the first intake of students aware that the international offshore sector is watching Plymouth with interest.

Launched at Oceanology 2012 in London, in March, the academy is the first distance learning programme of its kind in the world. A partnership between the University and global geosciences giant Fugro, with support from the Royal Navy at Flag Officer Sea Training – Hydrography, Meteorology (FOST-HM), it will provide vital scientific and technical education to students working on oil rigs and survey vessels thousands of miles away from the nearest college or university.

More than 400 people have already registered their interest in either undergraduate or postgraduate study, and 100 are confirmed for one of three start dates in July and October this year, and March 2013.

Richard said: “We have had an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the Hydrographic Academy and now the important thing is that we convert that ‘buzz’ into confirmed places. The geosciences industry has for several years been calling for improved levels of training and education in fields such as hydrography, oceanography and meteorology – and Plymouth has provided them with the portal to achieve that goal.

“It has been a challenging and rewarding journey so far as we have had to establish our own blueprint. No one has ever undertaken this kind of venture before.”

The opportunity to break new ground was presented to Richard two years ago when Fugro approached him with the proposal, looking for a higher education institution to bring it to fruition. Together, they took the idea to the University, and then applied for and obtained STEM funding from HEFCE to help establish the proof of concept.

Richard said: “We have had tremendous support from the School of Marine Science and Engineering, and the wider Faculty of Science and Technology and the University, because everyone has seen the potential of the academy.

“The partnership with industry has been critical as well. Fugro has already put through a cohort of employees on a pilot run, and that has helped us to tweak the programme ahead of the launch. They’re delighted with what we have been able to achieve together.”

The programme uses a variety of methods to deliver its curriculum, and even takes account of the lack of online access that most offshore students will face, by storing all of the learning resources and assignments on a single 8-gigabyte memory stick. The stick houses an HTML ‘portal’ through which the modules can be accessed.

Then, once students have internet connection, they can upload assignments, download new materials, and even conduct tutorials over Skype. They are also encouraged to upload videos to a secure area of YouTube to share their reflections and experiences with academics. Supplementing this will be practical work delivered on site at the University and possibly at its Coxside facilities as well.

Richard said: “The Hydrographic Academy answers the call for career development and training opportunities in the offshore and oil industries, and for the first time, establishes a pathway for school-leavers to enter the sector directly.

“It seems fitting that in the 150th anniversary of the School of Navigation, Plymouth should again deliver something truly enterprising for the maritime industry.”
Was it a hard decision to give up the role of Dean of the Faculty of Arts for Deputy Vice-Chancellor?

Yes, in many ways it was. Even though I was absolutely certain I wanted to apply for the post, it was difficult to think about what I might be leaving behind as Dean. I very much enjoyed my role as Dean of Arts; the faculty has achieved so much since its move to Plymouth in 2007, and there is much more we want to do. Events like the recent British Art Show and the upcoming Plymouth International Book Festival show that the city is ‘on the cultural map’, and the University and faculty have been crucial to achieving that success.

What were some of the highlights for you during your time leading the faculty?

Well I’ve mentioned one – the British Art Show. That was a magnificent act of cooperation between different arts organisations across the city. We had our problems – the logistical challenges were immense – but on the opening night the atmosphere was amazing. After launching the event at the University, I walked across to the city’s museum and art gallery for the next bit of the evening. I joined the crowd waiting to get in, and a woman turned to me and said she’d lived in Plymouth all her life and never thought she’d see queues on the street wanting to get into an art exhibition! Another memorable moment for me was the opening of the Roland Levinsky Building – sadly without Roland. What a platform it’s proved to be for the faculty in Plymouth! And every year, the Arts Degree Show creates an electric atmosphere in both RLB and the Scott Building, with so much fantastic student work. There really are so many high points for me – the growth of Peninsula Arts, the studios at Royal William Yard – but most of all I’m proud of the way our staff have committed to the city and really contributed to its profile and reputation.

What do you think you can bring to the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor?

A true story – sorry, another one! I’ve just been working with a range of senior leaders from across UK universities. A Dean from one of our benchmark comparison universities said to me he couldn’t think of another ‘post 92’ (his words) which was achieving as much as we were. Well, without sounding complacent, he’s right! We’ve refused to be defined by what others in the sector might expect of us, and we’ve established a clear idea of where we’re going. We’ve committed ourselves to becoming the enterprise university; we’re embedded in and engaged with our many different communities; we’ve got world-leading research and expertise across our staff base; we have some of the most innovative teaching practices and partnerships; we’re privileged to work with incredibly talented and generous students. Yet across the sector I’ve never known such a turbulent time. We’ve had to review how we maintain the quality of our work with increasingly constrained resources. We’ve had to set about doing things differently, and that can be painful; certainly challenging. And I guess the biggest challenge is to improve those things we need to do better or differently without undermining the quality of what we do well.

When I saw the details of the DVC post I thought there was something I could bring to the Deputy’s role that would support and promote the work of my colleagues but at the same time help us face those tough, institutional and sector-wide issues. I think I can be both champion and challenger. Sounds a bit heroic doesn’t it?! What I mean is I’m passionate about the idea of a university and will always defend...
its role as a creator and custodian of knowledge. But I’m not so passionate as to not see the need for universities to regularly review and renew their ‘contract’ with wider society and be ready to accommodate as well as initiate change.

**Q How do you assess the HE sector today? And what are the key issues over the next couple of years?**

Change is seldom a threat in itself but the speed of change can be destabilising. And we’ve had great rapidity of change over the last few years. Student funding, the cap on student numbers, the threat of concentrating research funding in fewer institutions, potential restrictions on international access to UK universities, I could go on. We have to be careful that national policies do not depress aspiration, and that we do all we can to promote the value of a university and maintain our record of attracting students from all social groups. Attending university is a transformational experience.

**Q You’ve been one of the champions of engendering an entrepreneurial mind-set in students – something we see right across the Faculty of Arts. How important is it that we deliver more than just the curriculum to students?**

I think it is desperately important. Our core activities are teaching and research, but making our expertise in these areas available to others is a fundamental way of creating an ‘outward-looking’ university, one that links with employers, businesses, and communities. They, in turn, inform, enrich and stimulate the work we do. It sounds simple, but when we were shaping the idea of the enterprise university it was challenging to communicate that thinking and create the space for colleagues to develop their own take on enterprise and ‘becoming entrepreneurial’ in their work. Now I think we see it as second-nature to the way we go about our business; something our students deserve; something that infuses our way of working. I think it was Professor Iain Stewart who said it was in Plymouth’s DNA. I think he’s right.

**Q Can you tell us something about yourself that staff at the University might not know?**

Lots... but I think we’ve run out of space haven’t we?!!
“The nature of sport in this country has changed dramatically since Victorian times. Its stars are now national icons and regularly make the front pages of national newspapers and not just the back.”

Tom Daley; Swimmer Anthony James; Olympic Torch relay runner Associate Professor Ian Sherriff; Innovation for the Creative and Cultural Industries (ICCI) showcasing their 360-degree panoramic technology as part of the Cultural Olympiad in Weymouth: look close enough and you’ll find scores of ‘participants’ at London 2012 with a Plymouth connection.

And for one academic, the games have provided a unique research opportunity, and a vehicle to examine how the Olympic ideals have impacted on the British way of life since the modern incarnation was launched by Baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1896.

And for one academic, the games have provided a unique research opportunity, and a vehicle to examine how the Olympic ideals have impacted on the British way of life since the modern incarnation was launched by Baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1896.

Professor of Contemporary History Kevin Jefferys has conducted extensive research into the links between sport and politics since the Victorian era. But following the announcement of the successful Olympic bid in 2005 – the year he moved from Rolle College of Education in Exmouth to the main campus in Plymouth – he has focused his attention upon the nation’s long-standing obsession with the five rings.

Kevin is now a renowned national expert on the links between the Olympics and British politics, and in particular on the role politicians played in trying to boycott the Moscow games of 1980.

“There were a number of powerful nations, most predominately the US, who were leading the charge for a global boycott of Moscow, and Margaret Thatcher, the then Prime Minister, was under pressure from her counterparts to back it,” said Kevin, who leads a module titled ‘Sport and Society in Britain since c.1880’ as part of the MA History programme.

“Government papers within the National Archives show that she wanted British athletes to stay away as well, but the competitors resisted as they felt they were being penalised over a political issue. It is one of a number of controversies linking sport and politics in that period of British history.”

Kevin’s research has led to him writing papers for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and various national publications, including the BBC History Magazine. He has also published a book – Sport and Politics in Modern Britain: The Road to 2012 – which looks at the increasing impact of sport on British life since World War II.
“And 2016 is the 50th anniversary of our only international triumph to date on the football pitch, the 1966 World Cup, although by then – as a sports fan – I do hope that statistic may have changed.”

“The last time the Olympics were held in London (in 1948) they were known as the austerity games because wartime had just finished and state finances were committed elsewhere,” Kevin said. “For 2012, billions of pounds have been spent on the London games and hundreds of millions more are pumped nationally into sport as a whole every year.

“The nature of sport in this country has changed dramatically since the Victorian times. Its stars are now national icons and regularly make the front pages of national newspapers and not just the back.

“Politicians cannot simply ignore that and now have to take the nation’s sporting prowess into consideration when making their decisions because it has become an intrinsic part of Britain’s social fabric.”

As far as his research goes, Kevin’s focus on sport and politics will not stop now that the Olympic torch has been extinguished in East London.

“I am always trying to look at plotting contemporary issues through a historical lens, and there are many other sporting fields that would fit into that bracket,” he said.

“2015 marks the 50th anniversary of Sport England, which started life as the Sports Council and has invested millions of pounds into grassroots sports across the country. That is an ideal opportunity to examine the role politics can play in sport at a national level.

“And 2016 is the 50th anniversary of our only international triumph to date on the football pitch, the 1966 World Cup, although by then – as a sports fan – I do hope that statistic may have changed.”

Well, there’s always Brazil 2014!

Professor Jefferys gives a public lecture at 2011’s Festival of Research
Professor Camille Parmesan took up a newly-created role of National Marine Aquarium Chair in Public Understanding of Oceans and Human Health, through the Marine Institute in January. Renowned for her research on the impact of climate change on wildlife, and being the first to demonstrate that species are shifting their natural ranges in response to changes in temperature, she has a share in the Nobel Peace Prize as the lead author of one of the key reports to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

CONNECT caught up with her to find out how she is settling into life at Plymouth University.

Q What is now also clear to me is just how good the terrestrial side is – there is so much top-quality, international standard research taking place in areas such as ecology and climate change.

Q Tell us about the circumstances that led up to you taking the position in Plymouth?

Well I’ve been coming to Plymouth for many years now due to family reasons, but I also became involved with the research community here around ten years ago. I was invited to provide a keynote speech at a climate change conference and was really impressed with what was going on here. I was working on a global meta-analysis in relation to the effect of climate change upon species, and some of the very best datasets I was using were from Plymouth – so I’ve always had a huge amount of respect for the community here; for the University, the Marine Biological Association, the Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science (SAHFOS), and all of the other institutions based in the city.

Sometime later, I took a sabbatical from the University of Texas, and was based in Plymouth and Bath, and while working here with Martin (Attrill), he asked me if I would be interested in applying for the new position. So I really interviewed on spec, and the more I found out about it, the more I wanted to do it!

Q What does your role entail?

The key to the role is the translation of science so that it can help shape policy. This is something that I have been doing ever since I switched from basic ecology to climate change, and I’ve recently been under pressure to do less of it! Many universities do not consider it to be a primary function, but the appeal of this position is that it requires you to engage with policy makers and the public through outreach. So I do a lot of work with international bodies such as the IPCC and the International
Union for Conservation of Nature, as well as reporting to the US and UK governments, and bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the RSPB. I think it is a fabulous move on the University’s part to create this type of role, and I think that those universities that do not will become dinosaurs. Plymouth has been incredibly forward-thinking in making this happen.

**Q** What piece of research do you regard as the most important in your career to date?

The most pivotal piece of research in terms of my career was the one that convinced me to move into climate change. I had been researching insect-plant interaction from a basic ecological perspective, and it was not giving me a great deal of satisfaction – in fact, at that time, I was not sure I was going to stay in academia. But when I focused through a climate change lens, documenting the range shift of this species of butterfly (related to the Marsh Fritillary), everything changed. It was published in *Nature* in 1996 and it sky-rocketed me into this area of interface between science and policy. The scale of that work, covering Mexico to Canada with records dating back to the 1800s, convinced many people that something really was happening.

I think that the most important piece of research in impact terms would be the first global meta-analysis on all species, which was published in *Nature* in 2003 – and again, there were a number of Plymouth datasets helping there!

**Q** What are your early impressions of the University and wider region?

As I said, I’ve been using Plymouth datasets for many years, and I knew the marine biology side very well. What is now also clear to me is just how good the terrestrial side is – there is so much top-quality, international standard research taking place in areas such as ecology and climate change. The Queen’s Anniversary Prize really demonstrates the research profile of the University, and those standards are being attained in many areas. Hopefully that confidence filters down to everyone. As for Plymouth itself – well it is one of the most beautiful places to work in all of Britain and Ireland!

**Q** What inspires you in your work?

The feeling that the science I’m involved with now has such an immediate relevance to society. It has genuine impact, and it is vital that we as an academic community engage with policy-makers. It spurs me on!

**Q** Where do you think the climate change debate will go in the next few years?

It has been depressing to see that we have gone backwards as a result of the economic downturn, and the situation is the same in the US as it is across Europe. Governments are in a money-saving mode right now and so the capital expenditure required up front to shift to alternative energy policies is a barrier to progression. But this way of thinking is going to cost us more in the long-term, and this is now being argued by key economists. Hopefully the global economy will start to improve quickly and we can get back to more long-term thinking.

**Q** Finally, tell us something about you that your colleagues would not know?

Well apart from the fact that I’m an amateur auto-mechanic (at least for old cars), I used to be involved with choral singing when I was younger, and was really into voice for many years. I had to stop because of work – but now I’m looking to get involved again because I love it and I miss it. If there is an opening for a light soprano here in Plymouth, let me know!
“We have had tremendous engagement across the board – from postgraduate students, teachers and academics, to parents and children in the audience at the book launch.”

The value of contemporary picture books to create space for philosophical discussion – and the reluctance of many adults to engage in such open-ended dialogue with children and young people – is the focus of a new book by an Associate Professor in the School of Education. Picturebooks, Pedagogy and Philosophy is the culmination of four years of research by Dr Joanna Haynes, working in collaboration with her long-time academic colleague Professor Karin Murris.

The book examines the impact that the growing literary genre – popularised by authors such as Maurice Sendak, Satoshi Kitamura, Anthony Browne, Jeannie Baker, Plymouth University Honorary Doctor David McKee, and Tomi Ungerer – has had in the realm of teaching. It goes on to explore some of the philosophical themes and notions of childhood and adulthood the books raise, as well as controversies surrounding the genre and the limitations of censorship.

Joanna said: “There is deep concern that a generation of teachers is often at a loss as to how they might work with some of these wonderful works of art and literature. There is an anxiety and nervousness about the issues that might come up in open discussion, an uncertainty about how to talk with children and young people about deep questions and themes of human experience.”

Citing examples such as The Rabbits, by John Marsden and Shaun Tan – a picturebook which explores themes of colonisation with strikingly ornate, complex and surreal imagery – Joanna said that the genre’s use of playful, ambiguous, and sometimes sombre artwork presented a challenge to teachers.

She said: “A number of authors have expressed their concerns that these picturebooks are often used in a very prescriptive and instrumental fashion. This has been a highly contested issue in education due to the perception that children’s literature should be a vehicle for simplistic social or moral messages.

“Our view is that these thought-provoking books are sophisticated works of art to be shared and enjoyed ‘inter-generationally’ – by people of all ages. They demand a philosophical approach to teaching, one that encourages adults to listen and engage in open-ended discussion where straightforward and final..."
“Our view is that these thought-provoking books are sophisticated works of art to be shared and enjoyed...”

answers are not necessarily possible. Such dialogue enables young people to explore profound questions and develop their confidence and capacity for independent thought and reason.”

From its origin as a research paper accepted by the Philosophy of Education Society Conference in 2007, the book evolved over a number of ‘writing weeks’ where the two authors worked side-by-side in a truly collaborative and conversational fashion. It has now been published by Routledge as part of its Research in Education series, and received a special launch at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, where Professor Murris is based.

Both authors have been invited to give the opening keynote talk at the VI International Colloquium of Philosophy of Education at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in August. Over the coming months Joanna will also be providing several other keynote addresses on the topic at events in the UK and internationally.

She added: “We have had tremendous engagement across the board – from postgraduate students, teachers and academics, to parents and children in the audience at the book launch.”

Illustration from ‘Not Now, Bernard’ by David McKee. First published in 1980 by Andersen Press Ltd.
A trek of 250 miles across polar glaciers and an ascent of the 2,260-metre high Barbeau Peak proved to be the pinnacle of The Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations for two Plymouth University students.

Tom Perriment and David Buckley braved temperatures of minus 30 degrees centigrade to become only the eighth expedition to reach the high point of the remote Queen Elizabeth Islands.

The pair were part of a six-strong team, led by the University’s Explorer-in-Residence Antony Jinman, that took a month to reach the summit completely unaided by any support teams or vehicles.

Tom, a final year Physical Geography and Geology student, revealed that singing Frank Sinatra songs had helped him overcome some of the more difficult moments. He said: “The expedition was life-changing, and has taught me to embrace every opportunity possible, as it is that which leads you to the top of the world and teaches you the most about yourself. The biggest challenge was maintaining determination when your goal seems far from your reach.”

Meanwhile thousands of miles away in Cornwall, gale-force winds and driving rain couldn’t dampen the enthusiasm for the University-sponsored Diamond Jubilee Arts Competition.

HRH The Duchess of Cornwall was guest of honour as she presented first prize to five-year-old Winnie Clemo, a pupil at St John’s Catholic Primary School in Camborne, and one of 700 youngsters who entered the competition designed to inspire the creativity of young people across the county. Winnie’s winner was a portrait of The Queen surrounded by toy money and coloured in red, white and blue.

The competition formed part of the University’s own 150th anniversary
“We had more than 600 people packed into the pews at the Minster, and the acoustics were simply magnificent.”

Simon Ible

celebrations, and the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor David Coslett was present to greet The Duchess.

David said: “As a University, we pride ourselves on inspiring young people to be creative and we were delighted to get involved with this competition. It generated a fantastic response from right across Cornwall and was a great way to contribute to the Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

“What really struck me was the way that HRH spoke to each of the finalists, and was tremendously interested in why they’d entered the competition and what they thought of the Jubilee itself.”

Maintaining the arts theme, the Ten Tors Orchestra provided a rousing tribute with its successful Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Proms Concert, held at St Andrew’s Minster Church, in the city. Star mezzo-soprano Juliette Pochin joined the orchestra and choir and led the audience in the singing of traditional anthems Rule Britannia!, Jerusalem and Land of Hope and Glory.

Simon Ible, Director of Music at the University, and conductor of the Ten Tors Orchestra, reflected on the event: “It was a grand occasion for Plymouth: The combined forces of the Ten Tors Orchestra and the University’s Choral Society created an uplifting programme overflowing with regal splendour.

“We had more than 600 people packed into the pews at the Minster, and the acoustics were simply magnificent. We also had the premiere of a new song, ‘Memories of You,’ composed by Plymouth University student Christopher Bevan, and sung by Juliette Pochin.”

The event also raised around £450 for the charity Help for Heroes.
PROFESSOR MARTIN ATTRILL TUTORS UNITED NATIONS ON MARINE RENEWABLE ENERGY

Professor Martin Attrill, Director of the University’s Marine Institute, had the honour of addressing the United Nations on the future of the world’s oceans. Martin travelled to the UN headquarters in New York to discuss the environmental impact of marine renewable energy – the potential knock-on effects of deploying offshore wind farms and wave power devices.

Reflecting on his experience, he said: “What struck me most about the whole event was how vital the development of marine renewable energy is as a tool for sustainable development, as well as its more familiar role in sustainable energy. It was clear that many developing nations, particularly small independent island states, are struggling to survive economically under the current cost burden of imported oil and see their surrounding oceans as a lifeline to provide them an independent source of energy and thus economic sustainability. They desperately need the technology transfer and knowledge exchange from countries developing marine renewable energy technologies, which is a prime factor the UN is focusing on during its consultation.”
A MEXICAN WAVE TO PLYMOUTH’S ROBOTS

Plymouth University flew the flag for the UK when they became the first team in the country to enter the RoboCup Humanoid League at robot football in Mexico. The competition brought together 24 teams from across the world and was Plymouth’s first experience on the global stage for the humanoid form of the discipline.

A series of technical difficulties hampered the side, but they still managed a creditable top-16 performance. Team manager Peter Gibbons reflected: “While we were disappointed with the result, this is not unusual for a team competing for their first time. Just qualifying for the competition was a major achievement for the team. With more than 130 different robot football teams from across the world competing in six different football leagues it is the place to be for robot football. We also made some great contacts within the other teams and look forward to developing the squad ready for next year’s competition, which is being held in the Netherlands.”

NEW PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

The University has unveiled its plans for a multi-million pound investment in the Faculty of Arts, with a new purpose-built centre for performance. The four-storey building, set to be located on the current Davy Building car park, will house a 220-seat theatre, sprung dance floor, rehearsal space, a box office and facilities for public events, and a special ‘brain lab’ for the Interdisciplinary Centre for Computer Music Research. It will be constructed to BREEAM excellent standards and is set to be open for the 2014 academic year.

Faculty of Arts Technical Manager Steve Carroll said: “The Performing Arts Centre will not only make a huge difference to the student experience we can offer to our students, but it will also be a fantastic venue for Peninsula Arts to host cutting-edge theatre and dance.” The centre has also been designed to provide extensive disability access, even to the point of enabling wheelchair users to access the high level tension wire grid above the stage.

ISSRR SOWING THE SEEDS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH PROJECTS

The University’s new Institute for Sustainability Solutions Research (ISSR) has held its first major internal event – drawing together stakeholders in a bid to stimulate new projects. The research event was hosted in Portland Square and featured presentations from academics across the institution, covering sustainable transport; environmental buildings; architecture; psychology; computing; environment and society; health; education; agriculture; governance; and culture and community – as well as a number of workshop sessions and a keynote speech from a Visiting Professor.

Paul Hardman, Manager of ISSR, said: “We had some excellent feedback from among the 100 or so delegates who attended, and I think there was a degree of surprise as to how much research is already under way at Plymouth in the field of sustainability. People appreciated the interdisciplinary nature and there was a tremendous enthusiasm for the work that we’re doing here. It bodes very well for the future of ISSR.”
HAVE A GREAT SUMMER – WHATEVER YOU DO!

The deadline for editorial submissions is OCTOBER 5, 2012
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