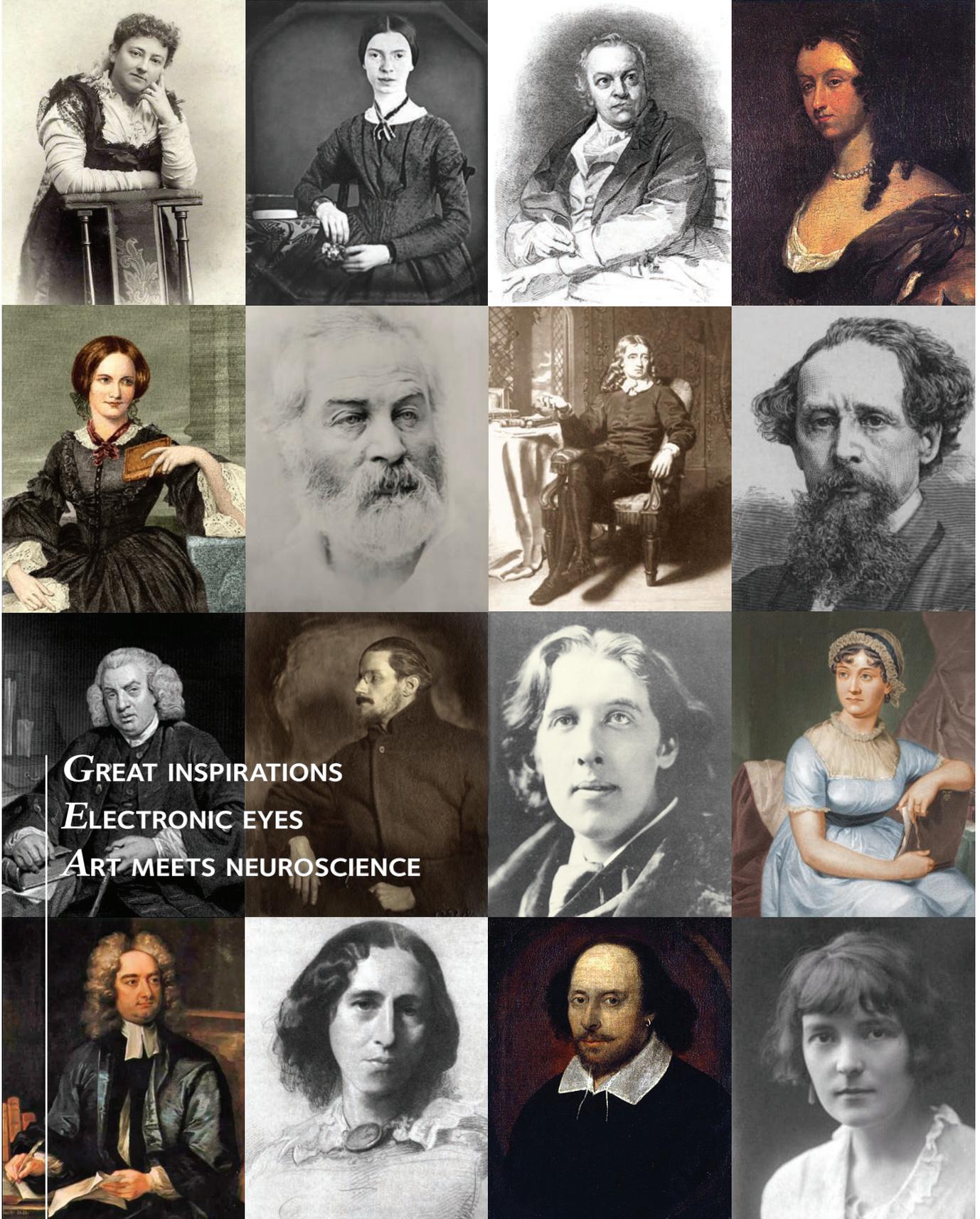


BLUEPRINT

Staff magazine for the University of Oxford | January 2013



GREAT INSPIRATIONS
ELECTRONIC EYES
ART MEETS NEUROSCIENCE

NEWS IN BRIEF

◆ A consultation is underway on the draft University Strategic Plan 2013–18. The plan, which has been developed by a steering group chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and comprising members from Council, the divisions and the colleges, can be viewed at <https://www1.admin.ox.ac.uk/pras/strategicplan>. Responses are invited from individuals and bodies across the University and should be submitted by 16 March 2013. A Congregation Discussion on the draft Plan will take place on 19 February. Details at www.ox.ac.uk/congregation-meeting.

◆ The University's Annual Review 2011/12, available at www.ox.ac.uk/annual-review, profiles examples of the huge range of research carried out at Oxford, from the discovery of previously unknown species on Antarctica's sea floor to research into gene therapy for people with an inherited type of progressive blindness. The review also showcases some of the major new developments over the past year, such as the opening of Radcliffe Humanities on the ROQ site, the acquisition of Manet's *Portrait of Mademoiselle Claus* by the Ashmolean, and the establishment of the Ertegun Scholarships and the Moritz–Heyman Scholarships.

◆ The Bodleian Libraries have been awarded £1.2m by the National Heritage Memorial Fund as part of a campaign to acquire the personal archive of William Henry Fox Talbot. Considered by many as the father of photography, Fox Talbot (1800–77) was one of the great polymaths of the Victorian age. His archive includes manuscripts, diaries, letters and early photographic images, as well as material he photographed for *The Pencil of Nature*. The archive is being sold

for £2.2m and the Bodleian hopes to raise the remaining funds by the end of February.

◆ Student support is the focus of the 2012–13 Annual Fund mailing, which has been sent to 177,000 alumni. Three versions have been produced: the first describes the current financial situation for undergraduate students; the second sets the current situation for undergraduates within the context of changes to higher education funding over the last 50 years; while the third examines the financial challenges facing those who want to pursue graduate studies. The mailing aims to encourage more alumni to make a gift to the collegiate University. Find out more at www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/support_a_student.html.

◆ Do you use the University's central IT backup service? The team who run the Hierarchical File Server (HFS) are looking to extend the service, improve ease of use and enable more University members to take advantage of it. To tell them what kind of backup service you would like to see in the future, complete the survey at <https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/direct/evaluation/4561>. The survey runs until 15 February and participants will be entered into a prize draw for a £50 Amazon voucher.

◆ Santander has two current deals for University staff. The first is 10 free shares for new or existing customers who open or upgrade to a 123 account before 14 March 2013. The second is a mortgage fixed rate of 2.49%, on a maximum loan to value of 70%. The offers are only available through the Oxford University branch of Santander located at Carfax. See www.ox.ac.uk/staff/news/santander_deals.html for details.



Ashmolean Museum



Rob Judges/University of Oxford Images

FROM TOP: *MADemoiselle CLAUS* LOOKS ON; FOX TALBOT, POLYMATHEM AND FATHER OF PHOTOGRAPHY; STUDENTS NEED SUPPORT

◆ The University has reported a £52.3m surplus for 2011/12, up from £15.4m in 2010/11. Total income reached £1bn for the first time, with research grants and contracts increasing by 8.6% to £409m. However, the upward pressure on costs continues to be significant. Expenditure rose by 7% to £971.8m, with staff costs – the University's single largest cost – rising by 4.1% to £499.1m. 2011/12 was also a year of record capital expenditure, with £139.2m invested in new projects.

Although this year's surplus was significantly higher than that of 2010/11, at 5% of income it is the minimum required to sustain the University's current infrastructure. Giles Kerr, Director of Finance, says: 'In order to undertake significant new activities in the longer term the University will need to generate larger recurrent surpluses to finance capital investments.' The Financial Statements, together with a commentary by Giles Kerr, are available at www.ox.ac.uk/financial_statements.



Rob Judges/University of Oxford Images



Check who's who at www.ox.ac.uk/BPlan2013

COVER: INSPIRATIONAL WRITERS (PP8–9)

RESEARCH ROUND-UP



◆ Scientists in the Zoology Department have confirmed what we all suspected: when it comes to sexual interaction, nothing's simple. Darwin knew that sexual selection was a hugely important part of natural selection, giving rise to diverse extravagant traits, such as the peacock's tail, whose only purpose was to compete for reproductive opportunities with sexual partners. However, his conception of this competition assumed that animals simply paired off. Looking at the reality of polyandry in the animal kingdom – that is, females mating with multiple males – the researchers have identified what is in fact a complex but highly structured pattern, as individuals choose between and compete over mates within non-random groups. The researchers have shown they can adapt methods of studying social networks to look in depth at these sexual networks, allowing them to explore how sexual selection operates on the evolution of particular traits. The network-based approach could also help to study the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

◆ A new book by Oxford academics has gone further than ever before in explaining why Shakespeare's plays contain historical inaccuracies. *Holinshed's Chronicles* is a 16th-century chronicle of the history of the British Isles, and gave rise to more Renaissance plays – including *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline* and *Richard III* – than any other source. Dr Paulina Kewes of the English Faculty and Drs Ian Archer and

Felicity Heal of the History Faculty have studied the text to explore its inaccuracies and what lies behind them. 'We have shown the complexity of *Holinshed's Chronicles*, which stems from multiple authorship, religious tensions among the contributors, and fraught circumstances when it was published,' says Dr Kewes. 'The authors and revisers came from diverse backgrounds and they used a huge variety of conflicting sources. Our research should revolutionise how we think of Elizabethan history writing and, by default, what we make of Shakespeare's and other imaginative writers' appropriation of it in their plays and poems.'

◆ The largest clinical trial ever undertaken to examine the effects of early HIV treatment, which involved Oxford researchers, has reported its results. The research into early treatment of HIV began in a laboratory headed by Professor Rodney Phillips at Oxford in the late 1990s. That research, he explains, suggested that 'very early treatment of HIV infection, shortly after the virus was acquired, could avert some of the damage done to the patient's immune system', and that 'if this protective effect was sustained then the inexorable downhill course of the infection could be attenuated'. This led eventually to SPARTAC (Short Pulse Anti-Retroviral Therapy at HIV Seroconversion), a five-year randomised controlled trial involving 366 HIV-positive adults from eight countries and

studying the effects of early treatment.

Currently, antiretroviral treatment starts not upon diagnosis of HIV, but once the immune count falls below a certain level (after which treatment continues for life). SPARTAC shows that a 48-week course of antiretroviral medication taken in the early stages of HIV infection slows the damage to the immune system and delays the point at which patients must later go onto lifelong treatment. It also seems to lower levels of HIV in the blood for over a year after stopping treatment, which could play a role in reducing the risk of spreading the virus to sexual partners. A separate analysis of the results suggests that the 48-week treatment was more beneficial the closer it was started to the time of infection. The findings reinforce the importance of frequent testing for HIV to allow early diagnosis. Before recommending changes to HIV treatment guidelines, more research is needed; it may be that an even longer initial course of medication, or even lifelong treatment from diagnosis, would be optimal.

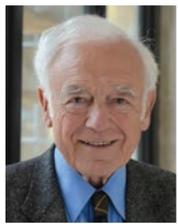
◆ The Amazon rainforest may be showing the first signs of potential large-scale degradation attributable to climate change, research suggests. A NASA-led team that included Professor Yadvinder Malhi and colleagues from Oxford has found that an area three times the size of the UK was strongly affected by an extensive and severe drought that began in 2005, damaging the canopy of pristine, old-growth forest in southwestern Amazonia. Analysing a range of satellite data, the team found that the damage covered a larger area, and persisted much longer, than previously thought. A subsequent 2010 drought caused further damage before the original losses had regrown. The team points out that the drought rate in Amazonia during the past decade is unprecedented over the past century.



HOW DOES DROUGHT AFFECT THE RAINFOREST?

▶ For more information, visit www.ox.ac.uk/news and www.ox.ac.uk/staffnews

PEOPLE AND PRIZES



John Allen, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Engineering Science and currently based in OCIAM, was presented with a Distinguished Scientist Award at the recent International

Topical Conference on Plasma Science: Advanced Plasma Concepts. His contributions to plasma science focus on high current and radiofrequency discharges, sheath and wave phenomena, and electronegative and dusty plasmas.



Dorothy Bishop, Professor of Developmental Neuropsychology and Fellow of St John's College, was a runner-up in the 2012 Science Blog awards of the Good Thinking Society,

which seeks to encourage curious minds and promote rational enquiry. BishopBlog is at <http://deevybee.blogspot.com>.



Russell Foster, Professor of Circadian Neuroscience and Senior Kurti Fellow at Brasenose College, has been awarded the Holst Memorial Lecture Award 2012 by Philips Research and

Eindhoven University of Technology. The annual award recognises eminent researchers who have made major contributions in the natural sciences for the benefit of industry and society.



Michael Freedman, Emeritus Professor of Politics, has been awarded the Sir Isaiah Berlin Prize for Lifetime Contribution to Political Studies by the Political Studies Association.

The awards jury commented: 'His work has had a significant and wide-ranging impact on political studies, notably within political theory...he has done more than any other contemporary to help us understand ideology in general, and liberalism in particular.'

Simon Hay, Professor of Epidemiology, Research Fellow at St John's College and Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellow, has been elected as the 52nd President of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and



Hygiene. The RSTMH promotes the study, control and prevention of diseases in man and other animals in the tropics and sub-tropics.



Dr Carol Leonard, Fellow in Russian Studies at St Antony's College, has been awarded the Ed A Hewett Book Prize of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies

for *Agrarian Reform in Russia: The Road from Serfdom* (Cambridge University Press, 2011): 'an outstanding publication on the political economy of the centrally planned economies of the former Soviet Union and East Central Europe and their transitional successors'.



Dr Gkikas Magiorkinis, Marie Curie Research Fellow in the Department of Zoology and a Emanuel Lee Junior Research Fellow at St Cross, is the winner of the European

Commission's Marie Curie Prize 2012 in the Promising Research Talent category, in recognition of his work on tracing how the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) has spread around the world.



Walter Mattli, Professor of International Political Economy and Fellow of St John's College, has won the 2012 Best Book Award of the International Studies Association for *The*

New Global Rulers: The Privatization of Regulation in the World Economy (Princeton University Press, 2011), with his co-author Tim Büthe of Duke University, USA.



Dr Sarah Thomas, Bodley's Librarian, has been appointed a Trustee of the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, which awards grants in areas including higher education, scholarly communications and information technology.

TURNER PRIZE GOES TO ELIZABETH PRICE



The Turner Prize 2012 has been awarded to **Elizabeth Price**, University Lecturer in Fine Art at the Ruskin School of Drawing & Fine Art and a Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall.

The prestigious prize is awarded every year to an artist under 50, living, working or born in Britain, for an outstanding exhibition in the previous twelve months. Dr Price, who studied Fine Art at Oxford as an undergraduate, was nominated for her solo exhibition at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, in which she showed a trilogy of video installations, including *THE WOOLWORTHS CHOIR OF 1979*. The work samples music, photographs, video footage and text to portray a fire in a Woolworth's shop in Manchester in 1979, in which ten people died. It was devised while she held the Arts Council England Helen Chadwick Fellowship 2010-11 at the Ruskin School, St John's College, Oxford, and the British School at Rome.

The Prize was presented by actor Jude Law at Tate Britain on 3 December in a ceremony broadcast live on Channel 4.

ACADEMICIANS APPOINTED



Three Oxford researchers have been elected as Academicians by the Academy of Social Sciences. They are: Roger Goodman,

Nissan Professor of Modern Japanese Studies and head of the Social Sciences Division; Sir David Hendry, Professor of Economics; and Judith Pallot (*pictured*), Professor of the Human Geography of Russia.

NEW YEAR HONOURS

Five Oxford academics were recognised in the 2013 New Year Honours list.



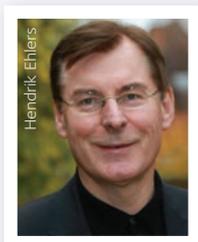
Hew Strachan, Chichele Professor of the History of War and Fellow of All Souls College, is knighted for services to the Ministry of Defence. A distinguished

military historian and an authority on the First World War, Sir Hew is a member of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and of the Chief of the Defence Staff's Strategic Advisory Panel, and is an advisor to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on National Security Strategy. In 2010 he chaired the Prime Minister's Taskforce on the Military Covenant.



Carol Robinson, Royal Society Professor, Dr Lee's Professor of Chemistry and Fellow of Exeter College, is made a DBE for services to science and industry.

Dame Carol is a renowned chemist who has made major advances in the application of mass spectroscopy to the analysis of proteins and other large molecules.



David M Clark, Professor of Experimental Psychology and Fellow of Magdalen College, is appointed CBE for services to mental health. Professor Clark's

research focuses on cognitive approaches to the understanding and treatment of anxiety disorders and has led to the development of new and effective cognitive therapy programmes for panic disorder, hypochondriasis, social phobia and post-

traumatic stress disorder. He is National Clinical Advisor for the UK's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme.



Raymond Dwek, Director of the Glycobiology Institute, Emeritus Professor of Glycobiology and Emeritus Fellow of Exeter College, is made a

CBE for services to UK-Israel scientific collaboration. He is Special Advisor on Biotechnology to the President of Ben Gurion University of the Negev and played an instrumental role in helping to establish the National Institute for Biotechnology in the Negev.



Judith Freedman, Professor of Taxation Law and Fellow of Worcester College, is made a CBE for services to tax research. Her work focuses on

corporate and business taxation. She has served on a number of Law Society, DTI and Inland Revenue Committees and advisory groups and is currently a member of the Office of Tax Simplification Consultative Committee on Small Business Taxation and the Tax Avoidance Study Group.

◆ In addition, **Martin Smith**, donor to the University's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, is knighted for charitable services to education, the arts and science; **Les Iversen**, Visiting Professor in the Department of Pharmacology, is appointed CBE for services to pharmacology; and **Sir Alan Budd**, former Provost of The Queen's College, is appointed GBE for services to economic policy and the Office for Budget Responsibility.

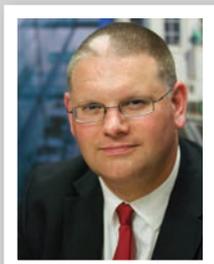
NEUROSCIENCE

COLLABORATION WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD



The Oxford-McGill Neuroscience Collaboration has won the McCarthy Tétrault Award of Excellence for Partnership. The award recognises international collaboration in research and celebrates collaborations between Quebec and the UK on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Quebec Government Office in London. The award was accepted by **Professor Alastair Buchan** (above, left), head of the Medical Sciences Division, and **Professor Claudio Cuello**, Chair for Brain@McGill, at a gala dinner held at the Savoy Hotel in London.

The Oxford-McGill Neuroscience Collaboration was initiated in 2009 to bring together some of the world's leading minds in translational neuroscience. It provides support for joint workshops, grant writing exercises and pilot projects in all areas of neuroscience, from molecular biology to clinical research. To date the collaboration has funded 24 projects, with a total investment of £210,000, and one of the funded pilot projects has contributed to a £4m Wellcome Trust Strategic Award for the University of Oxford Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute.



GUARDIAN ANGELS?

The shortlist for the *Guardian's* University Awards includes two Oxford nominations. **Climateprediction.net**, the world's largest climate modelling experiment, is nominated in the 'Outstanding research impact' category, while **Mike Nicholson** (left), director of undergraduate admissions and outreach, is nominated in the 'Inspiring leader' category. Voting closed on 18 January and the winners will be announced on 27 February.

VIEWFINDER FOUND

The young man (p20) is Sir John Portman, 3rd Baronet, who died in 1674 whilst a 19-year-old undergraduate at Wadham College. His elaborate marble monument in Wadham Chapel shows an elegant young man reclining at ease. The monument was moved to the ante-chapel in the 19th century, but Portman – a distant relation of founder Nicholas Wadham – is actually buried near the altar in the chapel itself.

ARRIVALS BOARD



PROFESSOR OF ZOOLOGY

Tim Coulson, Professor of Population Biology at Imperial College London, took up this post in the Department of Zoology on 1 January. He also became a Fellow of Jesus College.

Professor Coulson investigates how demographic rates vary across groups of individuals and environments, and seeks to identify the ecological and evolutionary consequences of this variation. His research focuses on large and small mammals, birds and bulb mites.

SHAW PROFESSOR OF CHINESE

Barend J ter Haar, Professor of Chinese History at Leiden University, The Netherlands, took up this post in the Faculty of Oriental Studies on 13 January. He is also a Fellow of University College.

Professor ter Haar is a historian of China, with a strong focus on cultural and religious history. He has worked extensively on local religious culture, ethnic identity, violence and fear, and social organisation within China, and seeks to demonstrate that traditional culture and cultural patterns are still relevant today. His current projects are a book on the question 'Where are China's witches?' and a long-term project on the study of literacy and orality, covering the period from the Qin dynasty (circa 221 BCE) until the late 19th century.



FROM LEFT:
PROFESSOR
TIM COULSON,
PROFESSOR BAREND
TER HAAR AND
PROFESSOR HARRY
DANIELS

PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION

Harry Daniels, Professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Sociocultural and Activity Theory Research, University of Bath; Adjunct Professor at the Centre for Learning Research, Griffith University, Australia; Research Professor at the Centre for Human Activity Theory, Kansai University, Japan; Research Professor in Cultural Historical Psychology, Moscow State University of Psychology and Education; and Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore, has been appointed to this post in the Department of Education from 1 February. He will also be a Fellow of Green Templeton College.

Professor Daniels' chief research interests are: sociocultural and activity theory; innovative learning in the workplace; special needs and social exclusion; and social, emotional and behavioural difficulty, including exclusion from school. He is currently Director of a three-year AHRC project entitled 'Design matters? The effects of new schools on students', teachers' and parents' actions and perceptions', a study of post-occupancy usage of five newly built schools. Its aim is to understand the impacts of the design of such schools on students', teachers' and parents' engagement in the educational process on a number of levels.

NOTICEBOARD



◆ **Sir Michael Boyd** has taken up the post of Cameron Mackintosh Visiting Professor of Contemporary

Theatre, based at St Catherine's College. As Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Sir Michael oversaw the hugely successful redevelopment of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and directed the RSC's eight-play History Cycle as the centrepiece of a year-long Complete Works of Shakespeare Festival (involving 30 companies, 19 of which were international). He was knighted in the 2012 Queen's Birthday Honours for services to drama, and stepped down from his position as RSC Artistic Director last September.



◆ **Richard McManus**, Professor of Primary Care in the Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, has been recognised by

one of the five National Institute for Health Research Professorships given in the second competition for these awards. He will receive around £1.5m of funding to conduct a programme of work which evaluates how involving people in monitoring their own blood pressure might lead to better diagnosis and control of high blood pressure in both hypertension and pregnancy.



◆ The new £11m wing at the **Botnar Research Centre** is now up and running,

with research groups moving in. The Centre houses most of the research carried out by the University's Nuffield Department of Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Musculoskeletal Sciences, and is adjacent to the Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre (part of the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust) at its site in Headington. The new extension doubles the size of the Centre, which will now house around 220 researchers.



STAR PRIZES

Oxford astrophysicists have recently been honoured by the Royal Astronomical Society.

Professor James Binney (pictured), Head of the Rudolf Peierls Centre for Theoretical Physics, has been awarded the 2013 Eddington Medal, for investigations of outstanding merit in theoretical astrophysics, particularly his fundamental and enduring contributions to galactic astrophysics.

Professor Roger Davies, **Dr Martin Bureau** and **Dr Michele Cappellari** are recognised alongside other members of the SAURON team by the RAS 'A' Group Achievement Award. SAURON is an integral field spectrograph first used on the 4.2m William Herschel Telescope in 1999; its primary aim is to understand the evolution of elliptical galaxies by using detailed observations of samples of nearby examples of these objects. The initiative is acclaimed for combining an impressive and optimised instrument design with the careful use of models and simulations to interpret the results, plus a high degree of organisation across the collaboration. The project now covers 260 galaxies and the SAURON team has already published over 60 papers that have attracted more than 3,500 citations.

JOIN THE MEDIA-SAVVY SCIENTISTS

Fancy working as a science reporter? *Caroline Cross* tracked down three Oxford scientists who spent a summer doing just that



Stockphoto/Mihajlo Maricic

Opinions of 'the media' vary, but love it or loathe it, newspapers, television and the internet are powerful vehicles for engaging large audiences with news, ideas and opinions. For most people, dealing with journalists is daunting, and for many scientists, conveying the complex concepts and specialised methods they use is a challenge. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, they fear their research will be misinterpreted or over-hyped.

Each year, in a bid to encourage researchers to communicate their work to wider audiences, the British Science Association – an organisation that promotes public understanding, accessibility and accountability of the sciences and engineering in the UK – offers ten scientists the opportunity to spend their summer working within a media organisation as media fellows. The fellowship allows scientists to gain first-hand experience of producing science coverage for the general public. It also provides the media outlet with an in-house science expert whilst offering fellows valuable insight into the day-to-day workings of the media. A number of Oxford academics have participated in the scheme.

Dr Lee Sweetlove, Reader in Plant Biochemistry, successfully applied for a media fellowship in 2011, and spent a month at *Nature*. 'I wanted to discover how hard it is to write accurate articles about scientific discoveries for the general press,' he says. He soon had his answer. In a report detailing his first day, he wrote: 'By 6pm my head is throbbing. The other journalists have filed their pieces... My article is still fragmentary... I have yet to come up with

a witty suggestion for a headline.'

The article, about rock formation on the moon, was the first of several he published during his stay. And in true media style, it was announced with the tweet: 'What do we do when a plant scientist joins the news team? Send him to the moon of course! <http://bit.ly/n38nRR>.'

By 6pm my head is throbbing. The other journalists have filed their pieces...

In 2012, Dr John Parrington, University Lecturer in Molecular and Cellular Pharmacology, took time out from grant writing to spend his summer at *The Times*, offices in London. There, as he searched for good stories to pitch to his editor, he discovered just how hard it is to get a science story published. 'It was surprising how many press releases failed to sell their story in a way that connected with the ordinary concerns of people, and instead only stressed the scientific advance,' he says. And when interviewing scientists about their work, he worried about misquoting them. But, he admits: 'By the end of my stay, I was much more confident about trusting my ability to get down the key quotes without having to pore over a lengthy recording transcript.'

All the media fellows found publishing and producing science coverage for non-specialist audiences immensely satisfying, not least because they saw their work in print, online or on-air in a matter of days – in contrast to the months it takes to see a

paper published in a scientific journal.

Leila Battison, whose 2011 media fellowship while she was an Oxford graduate student in Astrobiology took her to the BBC, found the experience invaluable and is sure it will change the way she interacts with journalists in the future: 'I will be more aware of the spin that can be put on a story, but I will make a greater effort to communicate my science in a way that is understandable and interesting to a lay audience,' she explains.

And for Dr Parrington, being a media fellow did more than just help him communicate science to the public: 'The fellowship has given me key insights into the way journalists work and how, as a scientist, I might enhance my relationship with the media in the future.'

ASTROBIOLOGIST LEILA BATTISON EXPERIENCED LIFE AT THE BBC



The British Science Association offers up to ten media fellowships a year to scientists, social scientists, clinicians and engineers from different backgrounds and stages of their career, allowing them to spend three to six weeks over the summer working with national press, broadcast or internet media. Applications for 2013 fellowships are now open, with a closing date of 11 March. Details at www.britishecienceassociation.org/science-society/media-fellowships

LEARNING FROM OUR LITERARY PAST

Open access to thousands of literary resources will allow great writers to inspire a new generation, reports *Matt Pickles*

‘Every great writer is a writer of history, let him treat on any subject he may,’ wrote Walter Savage Landor in an imagined conversation between Diogenes and Plato in 1829. Nearly 200 years later, researchers at Oxford are hoping that a digital research project will allow the work of great writers throughout history to inspire a new generation of readers.

Great Writers Inspire is an open education project centred around a website which brings together thousands of literary resources made freely available for reuse and repurposing by teachers, students and interested members of the public. The material combines existing great works of literature, including over 3,000 ebooks from the Oxford Text Archive, with over 30 newly-created Great Writer lectures and contextual scholarly essays. There are also over 200 related Oxford lectures released as podcasts, including series on Shakespeare, Austen and D H Lawrence.

These vast swathes of content will be a great benefit to learners and teachers alike, project manager Lisa Mansell from IT Services explains. ‘Great Writers Inspire provides a unique resource for literature educators and students to easily download, re-use, and share high-quality material for free,’ she says. ‘This also benefits academics, who can disseminate research-driven content to a large audience with relatively little effort, and graduate students, for whom Great Writers Inspire has been a means of publishing and developing a taste for open academic practice.’

Recruiting these graduate students has been key to the success of Great Writers Inspire as it assured the project of academic-level content from contributors who tend to be closer in age to the website’s target audience. One such student is Kate O’Connor, who worked on Great Writers Inspire to track down existing material which could be used on the site, while studying for an MSt in English Literature.

‘Great Writers Inspire sent me into the internet in search of open educational resources and what I found was remarkable,’ she explains. ‘There is a wealth of essays, lectures, documentaries, pictures, all free online, and often free to re-use.’

They are provided by universities, secondary school teachers, even research institutions. Computer literacy has never been more crucial for students of the humanities, but by the same token, students of humanities have never been more welcome on the internet.’

The sheer volume of material may sound imposing, but the site has been made easy to navigate by a search function and clear grouping of key themes and authors. There are sections for material on the Renaissance,

‘Great Writers Inspire provides a unique resource for literature educators and students’

Medieval period, 18th century, Victorian poetry and fiction, World War One, post-colonial writing, modernism and approaches to literature. The ‘approaches to literature’ pages are particularly relevant for teachers since they aim to illustrate how resources from Great Writers Inspire can be used as a starting point for exploration, especially for discussion in the classroom. 38 authors have dedicated sections, including Wilfred Owen, Oscar Wilde and J M Coetzee. Clicking on Coetzee’s page brings you one click away from a podcast on the Nobel Laureate’s work by Professor Peter McDonald of Oxford’s English Faculty.

Professor McDonald, also of St Hugh’s College, points out that Great Writers Inspire builds on a tradition of public engagement by academics. ‘Oxford scholars gave what were called “Extension Lectures” at the turn of the last century, the primary purpose of which was to reach out to new audiences beyond the academy,’ he says. ‘We are doing the same thing today, though via new technologies and in the almost borderless



GATEWAY TO GREATNESS: THE GREAT WRITERS INSPIRE HOMEPAGE

public space created by the internet.’

He adds: ‘At a time when scholarly monographs are being printed in ever smaller editions, and, given their high retail costs, bought only by major research libraries, initiatives like the “Great Writer” series certainly make it possible for us to think in new ways about what we do, who we do it for, and via which media.’

‘Great Writers is a great example of what digital humanities research can do, and where it ought to be going,’ says Dr Abigail Williams, an English academic based at St Peter’s College, who has been involved in the project. ‘Swimming around in the data deluge of internet scholarship can be bewildering and frustrating, but by pulling together high-quality research and resources in one place, and making them available to everyone, Great Writers will inspire new generations of readers.’

‘Working on the project has also given researchers in the faculty new insights into the interests and expectations of different user groups, and that helps us to communicate our work and ideas more effectively,’ she says.

Great Writers is an OpenSpines Open Education Resources project run by IT Services working with academics from the Faculty of English Language and Literature and funded by the HEA and JISC.

But are the educational opportunities offered by Great Writers accompanied by any risks? Only that of losing track of time, it appears. ‘The Wikipedia Syndrome comes into play,’ explains Kate O’Connor. ‘Once you start clicking you can’t stop.’

Great Writers Inspire can be found at <http://writersinspire.org> and the project blog is at <http://writersinspire.wordpress.com>. Thousands of other free and reusable resources from Oxford University are available at <http://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/open>

A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION
— VIRGINIA WOOLF



AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

Robert MacLaren tells
Ruth Collier about
pioneering surgery
that implants an
electronic retina
to restore vision

Tom Wilkinson/University of Oxford Images



RIGHT: A PATIENT WHO PREVIOUSLY HAD NO LIGHT PERCEPTION CAN NOW DESCRIBE THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS

Chris James has retinitis pigmentosa, a degenerative condition causing visual impairment and eventual blindness that affects approximately 1 in 4,000 people worldwide. It is the commonest genetic cause of blindness in the UK and is caused by the death of the light-sensing cells, or photoreceptors, that line the retina at the back of the eye like the film of a camera.

In April 2012 Chris was the UK's first ever patient to have an electronic retina implanted successfully, in an eight-hour operation in the Oxford University Eye Hospital, as part of a trial led in the UK by Robert MacLaren, the University's Professor of Ophthalmology. To date six patients with retinitis pigmentosa have undergone the pioneering surgery in Oxford, which aims to restore vision to those who are completely blind. The chip inserted has 1,500 light-sensing diodes which send information down the optic nerve to the brain.

'All our patients have been able to see to some extent when their implants were switched on,' reports Professor MacLaren. The patients could detect light immediately, whereas learning to interpret the new information takes time. Chris can recognise a plate on a table and other basic shapes, and can see bushes and hedgerows – something of practical use in navigating along a pavement, for example. Another patient can see the yellow line on the side of the road, again helping her chart a course along the pavement without stepping into the road. 'It is not normal vision, but for someone with no light perception in their eye to then be able to follow a yellow line can have a major impact on their quality of life,' says Professor MacLaren.

Tim Reddish, a patient in the trial, reports: 'I'm now able to identify objects and orientate myself', explaining that seeing things using the implant looks 'similar to a shimmering light in specific shapes, lines or contrasts'. Another trial participant can now see the shape and the windows of the Bridge

One patient can tell the difference between her two dogs by sight; another can see the bus approaching and stopping, and distinguish between types of bus

of Sighs in Oxford. One can tell the difference between her two dogs by sight. Another can see the bus approaching and stopping, and distinguish between types of bus. One even described going to *The Phantom of the Opera* and watching the chandelier drop from the ceiling in a key scene.

Professor MacLaren is the UK lead in a multicentre European clinical trial to assess the use of electronic retinas as a treatment for blindness. Markus Groppe, an academic clinical lecturer at Oxford, is also part of the team. The implant is manufactured by Retina Implant AG, a spin-out company from the University of Tübingen in Germany, where early work on the electronic retina was pioneered by Professor Eberhart Zrenner,

who in 2006 proved the concept that a previously blind patient could see again when the retina was stimulated by a light-sensing electronic chip.

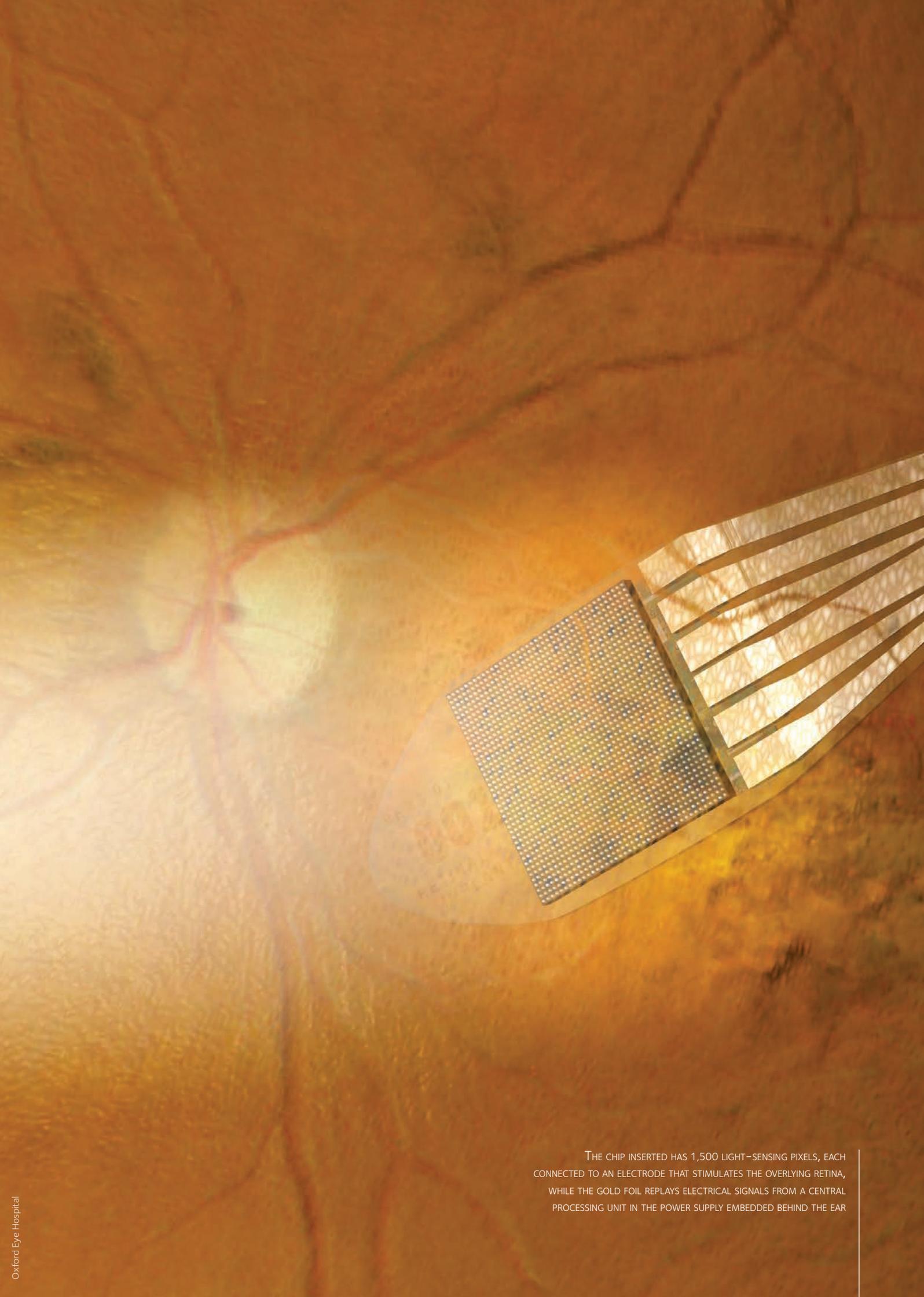
Those first patients were tested in a laboratory setting, with an external power supply. The current study involves inserting a power supply under the skin, and is the first to assess the device as a wholly integrated unit that goes everywhere with the patient.

The study is assessing practical limitations of the technology, including trouble-shooting malfunctions, while developing new surgical methods of implantation and identifying optimal frequency and power settings for everyday use.

Professor MacLaren is also pursuing other avenues to restore sight. He is leading a trial in humans of gene therapy to cure choroideraemia, a progressive form of genetic blindness, and this month his team announced results from a trial using stem cells that allowed blind mice to sense light again.

While the chips cannot restore anything like normal vision, the results are hugely promising – and there were some unexpected benefits that actually transcended normal vision. 'One of our patients described how she could tell if the kettle was hot based on its brightness,' says Professor MacLaren. 'It turns out the implant detects different wavelengths to the human eye and can see infrared. This is of course a major benefit and was quite unexpected to us.'

▶ Robert McLaren talks about his work at <http://bit.ly/ARblindness>



THE CHIP INSERTED HAS 1,500 LIGHT-SENSING PIXELS, EACH CONNECTED TO AN ELECTRODE THAT STIMULATES THE OVERLYING RETINA, WHILE THE GOLD FOIL REPLAYS ELECTRICAL SIGNALS FROM A CENTRAL PROCESSING UNIT IN THE POWER SUPPLY EMBEDDED BEHIND THE EAR

WHAT'S ON

TALKS

A queer-like smell

Wednesday 6 February, 6pm

Jacqueline du Pré Music Building, St Hilda's College

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/sexualorientation/lgbthistorymonthlecture

Crime writer Val McDermid will give the annual Oxford University Lecture for LGBT History Month. The talk will touch upon themes of growing up gay and how finding her voice as a writer was tied to finding her gay self.

Making science work

Thursday 14 February, 6pm

The Hall, Wolfson College

<https://www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/events-list>

Sir Paul Nurse, President of the Royal Society, will deliver the 2013 Wolfson Haldane Lecture.

Trust and free speech: some reflections

Friday 15 February, 5pm

Examination Schools

www.seh.ox.ac.uk/events/2013-geddes-memorial-lecture

This year's Geddes Lecture, marking the 30th anniversary of the death of journalist Philip Geddes in the Harrods bombing, will be given by the Rt Hon Lord Patten of Barnes.

Oxford London Lecture 2013: Where are the robots?

Tuesday 12 March, 6.45pm

The Assembly Hall, Church House, Westminster

www.ox.ac.uk/oxfordlondonlecture

Professor Paul Newman, BP Professor of Information Engineering, will talk about robotic technology and the challenges of building machines that can labour, protect, explore, manufacture, care and drive in our name. The lecture is run in association with the *Guardian*.

SPECIAL EVENTS

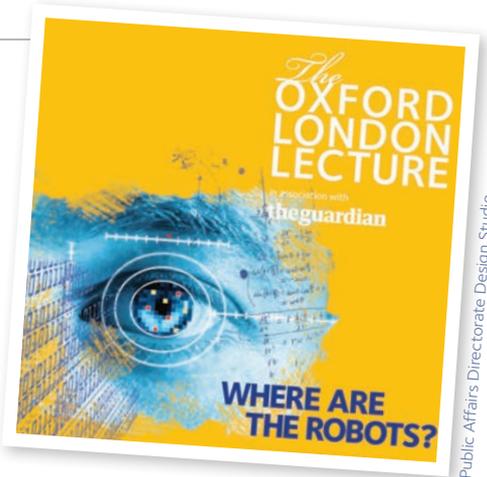
MetPrep materials preparation roadshow

Thursday 7 February, 9.30am–3.30pm

The Atrium, Earth Sciences Building, South Parks Road

www.ox.ac.uk/staff/events/metprep.html

One-day roadshow showcasing a range of materials preparation equipment and the latest



developments in materials preparation.

Musical Technologies: Old and New

Friday 22 February, 7pm–10.30pm

Ashmolean Museum

www.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/exhibitions

Experience music-making and music-reproducing technologies, from early sound recording to present day cutting-edge technology. Part of the Ashmolean's 'Live Fridays' programme, which sees the museum open its doors late on the last Friday of each month.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE GRANTS

Are you involved with a social enterprise or thinking of setting one up? If so, an Oxford University Social Entrepreneurship Grant may be just what you need. The grants, which are funded jointly by the University and HEFCE, are designed to help staff and students develop ventures that provide sustainable solutions to social issues. Projects must be independent of your work or study at the University.

The scheme, which runs for one year initially, has three levels of funding available: a 'try-it' grant of up to £500 to explore an idea; a 'do-it' grant of up to £5,000 to put an idea into action; and a 'build-it' grant of up to £15,000 to help an existing enterprise to scale up. All are accompanied by a support package, which includes mentoring and training.

'The scheme is accessible to staff at all levels of interest in social enterprise,' says Amy Anderson, manager of the Oxford Hub, who is working with the Careers Service, Research Services and the Saïd Business School to coordinate the programme. 'Whether you have a project in its infancy, a well-established enterprise or just an idea, there's funding available as well as a wealth

of support to put your idea into action.'

Among the first beneficiaries of the grants are Tasmia Akkas and Sebastian Huempfer. MSc student Tasmia has set up a community-based scheme to teach sewing skills to vulnerable women, and her £500 grant will help launch an 'upcycled' clothing business that helps the participants increase their self-confidence. 'The grant enables us to work with more women and set up a website to display their work,' says Tasmia. 'It means the project can truly fulfil its potential – it's an amazing opportunity to transform the lives of some very vulnerable women in Oxford.'

MPhil student Sebastian is using his £4,500 grant to purchase equipment and rent warehouse space for Soap Unlimited, which produces recycled soap from bars unused by hotel guests. The soap is then distributed free to NGOs as well as being sold to those who want to lower their



environmental footprint.

'Soap is key to preventing some of the deadliest diseases,' says Sebastian. 'Our goal is to reduce waste and improve public health by channelling the oversupply of hotel soap to homeless shelters and disaster relief agencies.'

More at www.careers.ox.ac.uk/options-and-occupations/work-for-yourself/oxford-university-social-entrepreneurship-grants-programme; completed application forms to caroline.bucklow@admin.ox.ac.uk by 1 March 2013. Please contact Caroline with any questions, or to discuss ideas.

STRUGGLING WITH STRESS?

How can you spot when pressure becomes stress – and how can the University Occupational Health Service help? Sally Croft explains



iStockphoto/aleksie

Ever feel as though you just can't cope any more? Too much to do at work...constantly scurrying from A to B...neglecting your family or relationships...no time to enjoy a leisurely meal or read a book? The tipping point between a busy life and starting to suffer from stress can be difficult to identify, so how do you know when you're suffering from stress, and what should you do about it?

'We're all used to pressure at work and by and large expect it,' says Dr Ian Brown, Director of the University Occupational Health Service (UOHS). 'We all deal with this, but when things get above a certain level – and there is good evidence that it's often additional problems outside the workplace that precipitate a crisis – we can start to suffer from stress. And that's not a trivial matter. It can lead to both psychological and physical illness if not treated rapidly.'

The big clue to spotting someone with stress, he says, is when an individual who has been performing well for a long time suddenly starts performing poorly. They may become very irritable, start not turning up for work or taking time off inexplicably, or may start using something to relieve their stress – alcohol, drugs or maybe a prescription medicine from their GP. Relieving the symptoms of stress with a medicine may be helpful but, he emphasises, it's of fundamental importance to get to the bottom of the problem and actually treat it.

Individuals suffering from stress may find themselves exhibiting characteristic symptoms: thinking about work all the time at home; arriving at work early and/or working late, but not productively;

disturbed sleep or finding it hard to get to sleep; disturbed eating patterns, possibly either not feeling hungry or comfort eating; or exhibiting other physical symptoms such as abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, shaking, suddenly becoming unwell when entering the workplace, or suffering from anxiety anywhere near work.

'If you're feeling stressed, it's very important to talk to someone'

'Of course, stress is sometimes other people,' says Dr Brown. 'Maybe there's a problem with a work colleague, or you feel bullied or picked on. Maybe you have relationship difficulties, or perhaps you or a family member has an illness that's impacting the way you work.' A good line manager, he says, should spot the problem and offer to talk about it, perhaps exploring how work practices or workloads might be modified. A line manager can also (with the employee's agreement) make a referral to UOHS, or alternatively an individual who doesn't want to involve their manager can contact UOHS directly for a confidential self-referral. 'Just pick up the phone and talk to us about your problem and how we can help you,' he urges. 'UOHS nurses can see patients independently, refer people to a physician or directly to the Counselling Service. The

University funds an excellent counselling service, with a panel of nine counsellors who can deal with different aspects of stress and offer options like cognitive behaviour therapy – but you have to access them through us.'

The UOHS webpages contain extensive information about mental health and wellbeing, including access to Xanthis, a confidential online stress identification and management system that gives in-depth information about stress and how to recognise when it's problematic. It provides self-learning tools to help staff improve their skills in managing stressful situations and is available at any time, in any location, on any computer, once you've made an initial (anonymous) registration via the University network. The UOHS website also gives details of courses provided by the Oxford Learning Institute to help with skills such as people and time management.

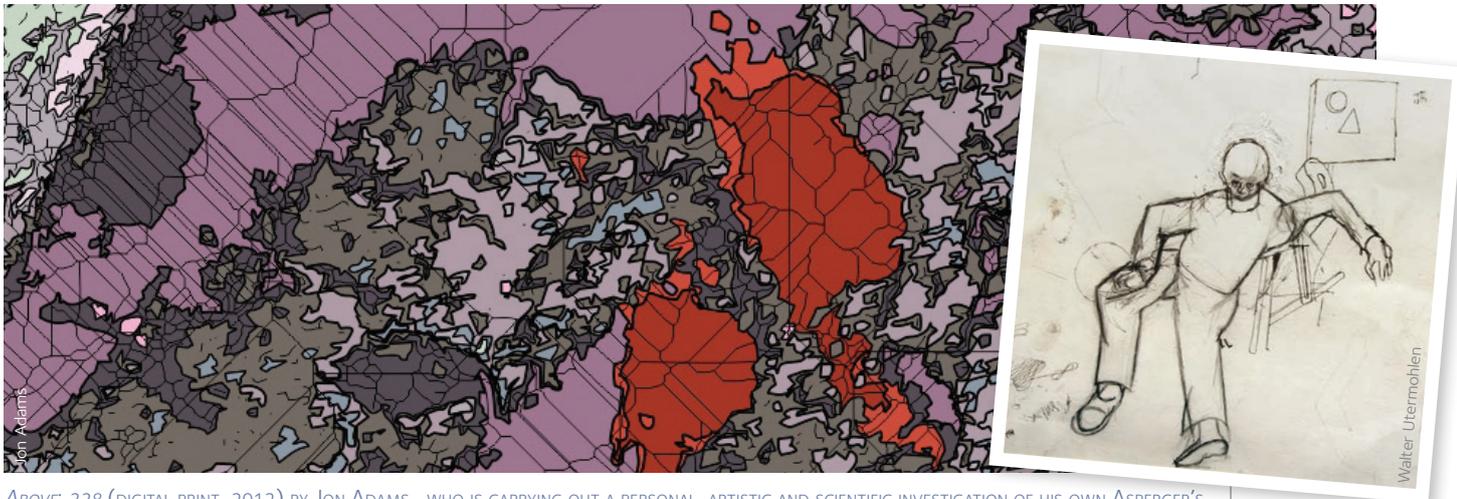
'If you're feeling stressed, it's very important to talk to someone,' says Dr Brown. 'It could be friends, a family member, your line manager, your GP, maybe your college doctor or nurse if you're attached to a college, an organisation like your local church, or us here at UOHS – and we're very happy to work with your GP or specialist if appropriate. But whatever you do, don't underestimate the effects of chronic stress; it can lead to significant and debilitating illness. Tackled early, we can deal with it effectively.'



More information and advice at www.admin.ox.ac.uk/uohs

THE ART OF NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

What can looking at a piece of art reveal about neurological conditions?
Jamie Condliffe previews an exhibition that hopes to shed some light



ABOVE: 228 (DIGITAL PRINT, 2012) BY JON ADAMS, WHO IS CARRYING OUT A PERSONAL, ARTISTIC AND SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION OF HIS OWN ASPERGER'S SYNDROME; AND INSET: *BROKEN FIGURE* (MIXED MEDIA, 1996) BY WALTER UTERMÖHLEN, WHO HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

For most people, contemplating a piece of art is more than admiring its aesthetic value. Rather, it's a prompt, a cue from which meaning and emotion can fill our brains with thoughts and questions. What's less clear, though, is how people with neurological conditions – from dementia to brain damage – perceive art. A forthcoming project, *Affecting Perception*, hopes to go some way to redressing that balance. Through a combination of art, seminars and school workshops, its organisers, Martha Crawford, Cosima Gretton and Rachel Stratton, hope to explore the links between art and neuroscience.

The trio are members of the AXNS collective, a London-based group with an interest in art and neuroscience. Together with the University's Department of Experimental Psychology they hope to kickstart people's thinking about neurological conditions, engaging them at a tangible level through art and debate to prompt questions about how brain conditions can affect perception in humans. The aim is to both entertain and educate. 'I think we're experiencing a movement towards looking at science through a creative lens,' explains Crawford. 'So we're trying to engage the community with the kind of learning usually kept in the University.' Of course, understanding neurological conditions is valuable intellectually – but it's an important step in breaking down the stigma attached to them, too.

Nobody understands that better than the Oxford academics who are leading seminars as part of *Affecting Perception*. 'There's a very coarse level of understanding of neuropsychology outside of academia,

and people are sometimes scared of neurological conditions,' explains Professor Glyn Humphreys. 'I think anything we can do to raise awareness has to be a good thing.' That's why he'll be taking the chance during *Affecting Perception* to talk about his studies of patients with visual agnosia: a condition where patients can't associate visual stimuli with meaning.

'We're trying to engage the community with the kind of learning usually kept in the University'

While visual agnosia is rare, as it requires both sides of the brain to be damaged, it is of great interest both medically and artistically. Artists are often told to dissociate meaning and aesthetic in order to explore the two more thoughtfully; Humphreys' research digs deep into the neurological condition to understand how the two are separated in otherwise healthy patients. These aren't merely academic questions though. Humphreys and his colleagues feed their academic work into developing treatment and diagnosis schemes for patients with neurological conditions too, and are currently working on a large-scale study which will lead to a standardised test of cognition for stroke patients – something which has until now been missing.

While patients with agnosia struggle

to make the most of their senses, others suffer quite the opposite problem. Professor Charles Spence, who will also be speaking as part of *Affecting Perception*, studies synaesthesia – that rare and curious condition where stimulation of one sense leads to automatic experiences in a second. Numbers that appear as colours, perhaps, or visual motion which appears to be associated with sounds. But there are more subtle forms of synesthesia – called cross-modal correspondences – which affect us all. They include the kinds of subliminal messages that marketing folk adore: red stars make most of us think of carbonated or bitter flavours, for instance, which may account for some of the success of Heineken and San Pellegrino.

The effect can achieve more than selling drinks, though. 'Many artists have claimed to be synesthetes, from Kandinsky to Hockney,' explains Spence. 'But other artists have used the synesthesia common to us all to good effect too.' The painting *Foghorns* by Arthur G Dove, for example, subtly uses colour, shape and size to evoke the deep, rumbling tones of the marine call, and its effect is uncanny. Through studying works such as these – and the artists who produced them – our academics can garner a better understanding of the brain. Fortunately for the rest of us, *Affecting Perception* should allow a rare and comprehensible insight into that world too.

▶ *Affecting Perception* runs from 2 to 31 March 2013 at venues across Oxford; admission is free. Details at <http://axnscollective.org>

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WHY AM I HERE?

CLARE WAKEHAM

Professional Development Adviser, Oxford Learning Institute

What does the Oxford Learning Institute do?

We support the work of the University by providing courses and online resources for University and college staff. We also support divisions and departments in their own staff development activities, advise on educational and personnel-related policy, and engage in research. Our courses range from half-day workshops to full programmes. They cover teaching and learning, leadership and management, and personal development, and some are aimed at particular groups such as women and people who are new to the University. We also provide ad hoc guidance and sessions – workshops, team development and so on.

So what's your own role?

I work in the Professional Development Group, mainly designing and delivering management and leadership development programmes – I run the Introductory Certificate in Management (ICM) for first line managers, and the Developing Leadership and Management Practice (DLMP) programme for mid-level leaders. The ICM has been going for about a dozen years, while the DLMP is a programme I set up when I arrived in 2008. Apart from these I provide bespoke activities on request – I'm currently running workshops for managers in IT Services – and design, and tutor on, online courses such as 'Recruitment and Selection'.

What do you enjoy most about it?

I love the feeling that I can make a difference in people's working lives,

but there aren't enough hours in the day to do all the things I'd like to do. I'd enjoy doing more research – I recently completed an MSc in Educational Research Methodology at the Department of Education and it's fired my enthusiasm – but it's time-consuming!

What was your childhood ambition and actual first job?

I wanted to be an archaeologist, a vet or a poet, but actually did none of them! I read English at St Hugh's and then, by way of a change, I worked in the shop at the Royal School of Needlework for a while, matching yarn colours to hand-painted tapestry canvasses. I spent many happy hours in the textile galleries at the V&A, sketching designs.

And how did you get from there to here?

I moved into local government, working on various projects in Social Services for eight years or so – and found I like working in large, complex organisations. I came back to Oxford in 1997 as a departmental administrator, then spent a few years in central Personnel Services, where I got really interested in how people learn at work. I came to the Learning Institute in 2008.

Aside from work, what's on your desk?

A metal toy elephant, rocks collected on climbing trips, a photo of my niece and nephew, pictures of mountains.

What activities do you enjoy outside work?

After my hill-walking became more and more adventurous I finally took up



rock climbing about twelve years ago. I'm a member of the Oxford University Mountaineering Club which organises climbing trips most term-time weekends. I met my husband through climbing – when we got married there were eight former club presidents among the guests!

What's the most unexpected thing you've found yourself doing?

At work: making a 'Sorting Hat' to represent a mythical Head of Division in a case study role-play. Outside of work, probably hanging off a rope in a waterfall in the Lake District. Or cooking chilli for 40 hungry climbers in a hut in North Wales.

How would you spend your ideal day off – and who would you take with you?

I'd go climbing in the Peak District, or on the Cornish sea-cliffs, with my friends. I'd probably take my niece and nephew, and get them on the rock for the first time. And because the day would be more than 24 hours long (it's a special day, presumably) I'd spend some time flying a falcon for good measure.

VIEWFINDER

WHO IS THIS RECUMBENT BARONET, AND WHERE DOES HE LIE? ANSWER ON P5.



Blueprint is published bimonthly for the staff of the University of Oxford by the Public Affairs Directorate

Editor: Sally Croft
Designers: Laëtitia Velia/Katy Dawkins
Picture research: Janet Avison

Items for possible inclusion are welcome and should be sent to blueprint@admin.ox.ac.uk

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