

Press release

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Review of the Year

"Over to you professor"

How University experts helped to clarify some of the major stories of 2005

With more than 100,000 people dead or missing in the Asian tsunami of Boxing Day, 2004, it was hardly a joyous January. As communities in the affected areas struggled to cope with devastation wreaked by the giant waves, questions were being asked about the safety of all our coastlines. Geographer [Dr Dominic Kniveton](#) responded to *The Argus'* concern about the Sussex coastline, while [Professor Fred Gray](#) was invited to talk on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme on whether the tsunami will affect our love of the seaside.



Will it happen to Britain's coastlines?

February saw a new health scare on food additives - this time, how the illegal food dye Sudan 1 had found its way into thousands of products. While

supermarket shelves were cleared, our food additives expert [Professor Erik Millstone](#) gave BBC Radio 4, IRN and *The Guardian* the low-down on the cancer-causing chemical.

With the General Election looming, politics' [Professor Shamit Saggar](#) joined a *Guardian* panel of experts in March to discuss how a new Government could address race relation issues.

And as the election campaign hotted up for April, our politics people were up and ready for analysis and comment. [Professor Paul Webb](#) talked to Radio Four's *World at One* about how the people of Hove would vote following Ivor Caplin's decision to stand down as MP. [Dr Tim Bale](#) gave BBC TV South East an expert's view on the Green Party's chances of returning an MP for Brighton.

With Labour back in with a reduced majority in May, the new concern seemed to be whether the latest *Star Wars* instalment and the new *Dr Who* TV series were too scary for young audiences. Psychologist [Dr Andy Field](#) assuaged parents' fears with some good advice in *The Daily Telegraph*. "The most sensible thing to do is to video it, watch it yourself and, if you think the imagery is too scary [for children], then not to let them see it at all, as opposed to turning off the television when your children already have a disturbing image in their heads."

The focus shifted to Europe for June, with the big question over how the Dutch and the French would vote on the proposal for an EU constitution. Giving analysis on the *non* results were [Professor Paul Taggart](#) and [Professor Jorg Monar](#) on BBC Southern Counties Radio and [Professor Jim Rollo](#) on BBC Radio Scotland.



Panic is not usually a feature of tube evacuations.

60th anniversary of other bombings - Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In commemoration of the first atomic attack that killed 45,000 people instantly and has caused more than 45,000 radiation-linked deaths since 1945, the University of Sussex's Quaker chaplain **Paul Oestreicher** renewed a new plea in *The Guardian* and the *Church Times* for nuclear disarmament. He was back in the spotlight in October, when BBC TV News invited him to comment on the reconsecration of Dresden's Frauenkirche, which was destroyed in the allied bombings of World War Two.

Also in October, **Professor Richard Black** joined a discussion on BBC 2's *Newsnight* giving an academic perspective on the issue of environmental refugees worldwide, and challenged a view that the numbers now peak 50 million.

Does drunken consent still mean consent? This was the question that dominated November's news pages for a few days after a judge instructed a rape case jury to return a not guilty verdict on the grounds that the complainant was too drunk at the time to know whether or not she had consented. Law professor **Jennifer Temkin**, who specialises in sexual offences cases, was called upon by *The Guardian*, BBC Online, ABC Broadcasting (Australia), among others for her legal expertise.

And finally, December saw the Conservatives with a new leader in the shape of David Cameron. Will he turn out to be the Tories' tonic? **Dr Tim Bale** reviewed the man's first week in the opposition hot seat for BBC Southern Counties Radio.

Music, literature, beer and song



Top score for sailors

In July, the news that London had wSite maintained by: Web team for 2012 was immediately overshadowed by iDisclaimer | Feedback suicide bombings on three underground trains and a city bus, followed by the failed attempts just two weeks later. By tragic coincidence, research by psychologists **Dr John Drury** and **Dr Chris Cocking** into tube evacuation procedures was on exhibition at the Royal Society. Their work was reported by *The Times* and Radio 5 Live before the attacks, while news reporters clamoured for interviews with the psychologists in the wake of the atrocities.

August saw the



Lives lost through the first atomic bomb are remembered.

Brave new works, the classics revisited and celebrations of the lives of some of the world's literary greats is how Sussex connected with the arts this year.

One of the highlights of the 2005 Brighton Festival was, undoubtedly, composer Dr Ed Hughes live surround-sound score to accompany the 1925 movie masterpiece **Battleship Potemkin**. Rated as a "must see" by national arts critics, the premiere performance was a sell-out at the British Engineerium in Hove and went on to wow audiences at the Cheltenham Festival.

Also premiered this year was a challenging new work by award-winning Sussex composer Sam Hayden The

ensemble piece, *Relative Autonomy*, was specially commissioned and performed by the [London Sinfonietta](#). The concert, billed as 'Young Brits', also featured works by other contemporary composers and was recorded for broadcast on BBC Radio Three's *Hear and Now*.

Joycean fans were delighted in May when an exhibition celebrating Irish literary giant [James Joyce](#) made its UK debut at Sussex. International Joyce, recounting the author's life and works in words and photographs, was on show at the University's Library and was accompanied by screenings of film adaptations of his work and open lectures. The exhibition ran until June 16, the "Bloomsday" referred to in his masterpiece, *Ulysses*.

Lesser-known aspects of the life of another celebrated author were revealed for the first time this year when Dr Sybil Oldfield, reader in English, edited the letters of condolence sent to the family of [Virginia Woolf](#). The resulting book, *Afterwords*, gave personal and intimate insights into what people really thought of the revered and feared author. "During her life, she was accused of being aloof and sarcastic," says Dr Oldfield. "But it is obvious from these many letters that people felt supported by her and sensitively understood."

There was much singing, dancing and beer-drinking when a collection of notes, diaries and observations by folk legend [Bob Copper](#) were presented to the University of Sussex Library. Three generations of the Copper family - attended the presentation party at the University library, where an invited audience heard them sing together in the style taught to them by Bob, who died aged 89 last year.

Young filmmakers of the future got a change to show their art to a wider audience at the first ever [SEE Brighton Documentary Film Festival](#) at the Sussex Arts Club, Brighton. The seven short films by Sussex students included a wry look at "cursed" Hastings, a moving animation depicting a child's journey to Auschwitz and the lives of two extraordinary women photographers.



Animated film of a young Jewish girl's journey to Auschwitz.

Success and Sussex

All the effort put into repositioning Sussex's brand identity paid off this year when the University became the first higher education institution to win a major design award for its bold new look.



The University's rebranding team celebrated success.

The University's publications and branding team, along with design agency Blast, beat phone giants O2, whisky makers Chivas Brothers, property development Chiswick Park and Vueling Airlines to take top honours at [The Design Business Association's Design Effectiveness Awards](#) at The Trocadero, London

The prize came after we proudly announced that we had again been ranked among the world's finest universities. According to the *Times Higher Education Supplement's* [World Rankings 2005](#), Sussex is 13th among UK universities, 36th in Europe and 100th in the world.

Following on with the success, Sussex's [University Challenge](#) team romped to victory in the first round of the 2005 competition, beating Sheffield University by 235 points to 100.

The brains of students Anna Fuller, Noel Cooper, Remi

Guillichun and Nick Blackett will be put to the test again in the New Year for round two.

Plenty of individuals were also celebrating personal successes this year:

Art historian [Professor David Alan Mellor](#), was the subject of a *Guardian* profile and given a special

"lifetime achievement" award by the Royal Photographic Society for his involvement in curating ground-breaking exhibitions, such as Cityscape at the Royal Academy in 1977. He remembers: "Until then, people had always segregated media so that sculpture never said anything about painting, and photography never said anything about sculpture. We helped to change that agenda."

[Duncan Mackrill's](#) career as music curriculum tutor at the University of Sussex hit a high note after he was named among the 50 winners of a prestigious national teaching award. Mackrill, who has taught secondary Post-graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) students at Sussex for six years, was chosen as one of the "rising stars" in the 2005 National Teaching Fellowship Scheme for his innovative approach to music education.

Science technician [Dave Randall's](#) photograph of a head louse may have made some people's skin crawl, but it also won him a Biomedical Image Award from the Wellcome Trust. Dave worked with commercial photographer Garry Hunter to produce the image with a scanning electron microscope. It was used by pharmaceutical company Pfizer, before being given to the library of the Wellcome Trust.



The photo that ticks the boxes for Biomedical Image Award.

[Professor George Mather's](#) research in human visual perception won him one of the top three prizes at the European Conference on Visual Perception, held in Spain this year. The competition was for the best visual illusion. Professor Mather's entry was entitled "[Two-stroke motion](#)". See if you can work it out.

Animal magic

Animal magnetism of a kind was at work at Sussex during the year, as reporters found themselves repeatedly attracted to research stories relating to all creatures great and small. Ants, bats, snails, gorillas, monkeys and elephants were among the diverse subjects observed by academics in psychology, biochemistry, neurobiology and ecology.



Autobat will help track the habits of the elusive Bechstein's bat.

Ecologist [Dr David Hill](#) came up with an ingenious way to trap and tag woodland bats so that he could study their mysterious nocturnal activities. He and his team developed the [AutoBat](#), an electronic device that simulates bats' social calls. The sound emitted lures bats into a net, where they can be safely caught and fitted with a tracking device.

Dr Hill said: "Very little is known about woodland bats. They are extremely difficult to observe in their foraging and roosting habitats, which are usually in dense woodland, and they can be very hard to capture."

The team will now use the device to survey the population distributions of one of the country's rarest mammals, Bechstein's bat.

The [common pond snail](#), meanwhile, has been helping [Professor George Kemenes](#) to explore ways of treating memory loss in humans. Professor Kemenes, a neuroscientist, uses snails because surprisingly they share the same basic learning and memory mechanisms as humans, and because their brain cells are large and easy to study. The research should eventually feed into drug therapy for the treatment of memory loss in people with conditions such as Alzheimer's.

Professor Kemenes said: "The aim is to find brain molecules that are crucial for the building up and maintenance of long-term memory and learning."

The return of a very particular native of Norfolk, thanks to the efforts of, among others, ecologist [Professor Trevor Beebee](#), was heralded on Radio 4's *Today* programme in August. The northern pool [frog](#) was reintroduced to East Anglia, having died out in the early 1990s, after certain genetic markers, including the frog's croak having a distinctive Norfolk accent, showed that the early 1990s population and frogs in Sweden were from the same genetic type or "clade" once native to England. A group of 75 Swedish frogs are now making themselves at home at an undisclosed location in Norfolk.



The croakers are back in Norfolk.

Dr Julia Wycherley, one of Professor Beebee's research team, carried out the bioacoustics research into the mating calls, said: "The frog mating calls of Norfolk and Scandinavia generally had a lower frequency (pitch) and this in turn gave the calls a unique 'accent'."

September saw psychologist [Dr Gillian Forrester](#) putting [gorillas](#) in the picture at the British Association for the Advancement of Science Festival in Dublin. She was there to explain how she filmed the impressive primates as part of her research into communication. She used a novel video observation technique, employing simultaneous close-up and wide-angle shots of gorillas at Port Lympne Wild Animal Park in Kent to observe how they communicate with each other using non-verbal signalling and gestures.

Dr Forrester said: "The way to understand the rise of verbal language is to study our closest living relatives - the great apes. We assume they may be capable of human-like language, but we need to approach communication from the animal's perspective, focusing on non-verbal communication, which both humans and apes use."

Dr Forrester was called on to evaluate other great gorilla moments during 2005 - she commented for the *New Scientist* on gorillas using tools in the wild, and was at one point consulted on gorilla facial expression for Computer Generated Imaging (CGI) experts working on 2005's cinema blockbuster about the starriest gorilla of them all, *King Kong*.

November saw the spotlight move on to a smaller primate - the endangered brown-headed [spider monkey](#) - with the award of £230,000 funding from the UK government-sponsored Darwin Initiative for the PRIMENET Project, a partnership between University of Sussex and Environmental organisation Ecuador Terra Incognita. Environmental biologist [Dr Mika Peck](#) is coordinating and will be spending part of 2006 helping to set up the three-year project, which involves recruiting and training indigenous peoples to locate and monitor the dwindling monkey population in the rainforest canopy.

The spider monkey's biodiverse habitat is under threat from logging, pollution and road building. Dr Peck said: "The spider monkey is a 'flagship' species - if they are protected then everything else in the surrounding environment is too, and one of the rare biodiversity-rich habitats of the world is preserved."



Mourning their dead by touching old bones and tusks.

Elephant sensibilities are the subject of much folk lore - an [elephant](#) never forgets, we are told, while old elephants supposedly fade away in elephant graveyards in the wild. [Dr Karen McComb](#) put these "myths" to the test when she filmed elephants in Amboseli National Park in Kenya to observe their behaviour towards elephant remains. Would they be able to pick out the remains of dead elephants from other animal relics? While the elephants observed were unable to show preference for one elephant skull over another, they did show more interest in elephant skulls over other animal skulls, and were particularly affected by ivory, becoming agitated in its presence and repeatedly

touching ivory with their feet and trunks.

Dr McComb said: "Interest in ivory may be enhanced because of its connection with living elephants, individuals sometimes touching the ivory of others with their trunks during social behaviour. It remains possible that where ivory is present alongside skulls, elephants may recognise tusks from individuals that they have been familiar with in life."

The findings excited much interest and generated considerable coverage around the world.

[Ants](#) have often been lauded for their tenacity of purpose and intelligence - but it's the role of memory in the behaviour that fascinates Sussex scientists. Neurobiologists Dr Rob Harris, Dr Natalie Hempel de Ibarra, Dr Paul Graham and [Professor Tom Collett](#) took up ant training to show how they could learn a route that would lead to a food source.

The insects were trained to follow a short foraging route parallel to a black wall. The wood ants learned that the wall would be on their left when walking towards the food, but on their right when walking home. Unfed ants remembered to walk in the direction that placed the wall to their left, even when deposited midway along the wall. Fed ants did the opposite.

Professor Collett said: "We found that in exactly the same visual environment, wood ants retrieved memories appropriate to their food-ward journey when hungry and to their homeward journey when full." Now that's food for thought.

And finally...it seems appropriate to round off our tribute to the animal kingdom with a piece of bird-brained ingenuity that proved irresistible to the media. Enterprising blue tits made novel use of wall-mounted ashtrays positioned outside University buildings - by nesting in them. The *Daily Mirror* featured a photo that captured one of the proud homemakers perfectly.

Biologists [Dr David Harper](#) and [Dr Martyn Stenning](#) were on hand to explain the bizarre bird behaviour, which in fact made perfect sense. The ashtrays offered security, could be accessed through blue tit-friendly holes, and offered the perfect nesting material in which to rear the chicks - the filter material in discarded cigarette butts.

All our yesterdays

Time to look back on the times we looked back on this year. Still with us? As an anniversary year, 2005 proved pretty eventful and Sussex played its part in commemorations.

In January, [Holocaust](#) Memorial Day marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps (the liberation of Auschwitz on January 27 1945 is commemorated nationally as Holocaust Day) with the theme of Survivors, Liberation and Rebuilding Lives.

The University event, organised by the Centre for German-Jewish Studies in association with the Leo Baeck Institute in London and the Wiener Library, featured Holocaust survivor Jan Imich, who spoke about his experiences as a 'hidden child' in Krakow, Poland, and of the bravery of the Poles who hid him until he was captured by the Nazis. Sussex, the first university to hold such an event, is planning another Holocaust Memorial Day for campus in 2006.

February marked the 40th anniversary of the death of the greatest leader Britain has known - probably, [Winston Churchill](#) died in 1965 and was honoured with a full state funeral, the only time such an honour was accorded to a commoner in the 20th century.

But what did ordinary people really think of the man voted our greatest ever Briton - even as he led them through the 'darkest hours' of the Second World War? The answer lies partly in some fascinating diary material that was donated by the University's Mass-Observation Archive to the newly-opened Churchill museum at the Cabinet War Rooms in London.

The diary extracts record the feelings of men and women towards "Winnie" at various stages of the war. A prevalent feeling - even as early as 1944 - seemed to be that although Churchill was the man to lead us in war, he was not the one to lead us into peace.



Richard Briers meets the Mass-Obs team.



The liberation of Auschwitz.

The Mass-Observation Archive proved a real treasure of memories when it came to [V-E Day](#) and beyond too. In fact, the diaries proved so rich, not just in period detail, but also in people's inner thoughts and feelings, that it formed the basis of a much-publicised TV drama, [Our Hidden Lives](#). The programme, starring Richard Briers, was a dramatisation of the book by Simon Garfield, created from Mass-Observation diaries housed at Sussex and reflecting on those faced with life in post-war Britain.

Revelations of a sexual kind were explored in the TV programme about Britain's first-ever sex survey, [Little Kinsey](#) (named in honour of its bigger forebear, America's Kinsey Report). The post-war survey, now a part of

the Mass-Observation Archive, provided some eyebrow-raising contradictions to the usually prim-and-prissy view provided of the era. But perhaps the biggest surprise was the idea the press got that the survey was "buried" at Sussex to suppress the findings. The last place, surely...

The Department of Mathematics got into swashbuckling mode, meanwhile, to mark the 200th anniversary of the Battle of [Trafalgar](#), when it hosted a maths master class featuring tutors dressed as 19th-century sailors, armed with ship's biscuits and real cannon balls dredged from the Solent. The Sussex schoolchildren there to learn about probability and maths as employed by Nelson's navy were, thankfully, spared the horrors of grog and cat-o'-nine-tails.

Notes for editors

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