Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter. Well it’s not really the first as many old timers will remember PSYKLOPS that came out many years ago and about which we will include some details in future issues.

The aim of this (new) newsletter (suggestions for the title are welcome) is to inform ourselves and the wider community of the wealth of research activity currently underway in the Centre for Psychological Research at Keele. People visiting may not be aware of the variety of research interests of staff members. This newsletter can be considered an entrée and future issues will include more courses.

We start with details of three of our staff who have been involved in ‘literary’ matters. We follow this with details of some of the recent activities of our three research groups. This is only an introduction to their work and more details will be carried in future issues. details of those actually published in the last six months. We are sure to have issue for more details. We conclude with

Although we give details of a selection of publications there are lots more articles missed out on some by the more bashful members of staff. Check back in the next and chapters by members that are currently in press but here we only give interesting interviews with two new members of staff. Our intrepid reporters are already preparing more such interviews.

We should also mention that some of the work in this newsletter was conducted by staff who are moving on. These include Lucy Betts who is taking up a lectureship at Nottingham Trent University, Penny List who is also talking up a lectureship this time at the new University of Cumbria in Carlisle and Sol Nite who has decided to become a full-time artist. We wish all of them well in their future endeavours and hope that they will check out future issues to see what is going on.

The next issue of the newsletter will be out in the autumn so look out for some more exciting fare.

Editors
Over the past six months John Sloboda has been very active on several fronts. In January his book "Psychology for Musicians: Understanding and Acquiring the Skills" (co-written with Andreas Lehmann and Bob Woody) was published by Oxford University Press, New York. John already wrote most of his part of the book during his year-long Sabbatical of 2003-4.

The book is primarily aimed at music students in Universities and Schools of Music (i.e. people who know more about music than psychology, and are primarily interested in developing their musical skills), but may hopefully be read with profit by anyone interested in musical skills and their development. Each of the co-writers took primary responsibility for four out of the 12 chapters, but there was a lot of mutual interaction, and they hope it won't be easy for you to work out who wrote what!!

In April John’s other book was published. "Beyond Terror: the Truth about the Real Threats to Our World" (co-written with Chris Abbott and Paul Rogers), published by Rider/Random House (£4.99) in collaboration with Oxford Research Group of which John is Executive Director. Endorsed by figures such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Anita Roddick, and George Monbiot, the book is both a critique of the current "global war on terror" and also a manifesto for a new "sustainable security" approach to the major threats facing the planet. It also provides some basic recommendations for what governments and ordinary people can do to promote this approach. The writers argue that to avoid a highly unstable global system by the middle years of this century, a radical shift towards sustain new approach is needed to global security - and it needs to happen over the next 5-10 years.

John has also been very active in developing peace psychology in the UK. He was a founder member of "Psychology Applied to Peace and Conflict Resolution" (PAPCAR). This is a UK-based group loosely allied to the BPS, with a mailing list at http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/papcar/

The group describes itself as follows: "This group is for Psychologists interested in promoting the role of psychological theory, research and knowledge in peace, conflict and reconciliation. Its purpose is to allow people to communicate about theory and research, publications, events and other matters relating to peace issues. It is also to enable the development of a group
within British Psychology that can disseminate productive thinking about peace issues."

The group holds occasional meetings, and held its first day conference at the University of Kingston in April 2007. April also saw the publication of a book, contributed to mainly by PAPCAR members. This is R. Roberts (Ed.) (2007) Just War: Psychology and Terrorism. Ross-on-Wye, PCCS Books. John is co-author on three of the chapters. Two chapters (with Brian Doherty of Keele’s School of Politics) examine the rise and fall of the British peace movement, and analyse some of the psychosocial factors that may account for its relative strength at different times over the past 40 years. A third chapter (with Ron Roberts and Dave Harper) looks at how Peace Psychology could establish itself more firmly as a branch of professional and academic applied social psychology. They propose a version of the Hippocratic Oath for peace psychologists. "I undertake to give the utmost priority to using my psychological skills and knowledge to contribute to the reduction, and eventual elimination, of violence at all levels (physical, psychological, structural) as a means of addressing human conflict"

Both books can be found and purchased online: http://www.amazon.co.uk/Psychology-Musicians-Understanding-Acquiring-Skills/dp/0195146107 http://www.randomhouse.co.uk/minisites/beyondterror/index.htm

2. ANIMAL FARM

a report from our farm correspondent
John Hegarty

The luxury of a research sabbatical is getting away from it all – although in my new area of "ecopsychology", writing at home on the farm is more in the thick of it than away from it!

I have just finished a paper for an E.U. C.O.S.T. (Cooperation in Science and Technology) seminar on Green Care in Agriculture. Green care has been rediscovered! (George Bernard Shaw said that really new ideas in medicine are rediscovered every 100 years.) I can remember the farm attached to Stallington Hospital, Stoke on Trent (for people with learning disability) being closed, and indeed it was bought by one of my wife’s cousins. At one time, agri- and horticultural therapy was seen as essential for the incarcerated, and most farms and hospitals for people with intellectual disability or psychiatric difficulties, and prisons, had their own farm, and/or extensive gardens. Now most of them have been closed, the idea is gaining increasing acceptance that they are an essential part of our lives, especially if we are out of sorts.
A new associate, Dr Joe Sempik, from Loughborough University, is very foremost in this area of “social and therapeutic horticulture” (STH) and he heads the bit of the COST Green Care “action” (you have to be up with the jargon for EU work) on evaluating the benefits of “green care”. Interestingly, he (being a physiologist by training and having met too many medics.) has been pursuing the idea that STH will gain increased acceptance if a randomised controlled trial (RCT) could be done to show its health benefits. Since hearing this echo of a request to me thirty years ago to “prove” a new therapy for children with brain damage by doing a trial, I have been trying to persuade him that there are alternative approaches to evaluating an intervention, not the least because STH has very poor programme integrity. The broad discipline of “programme evaluation research” is a good place to start from, or even applied behaviour analysis, single case methods. Anyway, Joe asked me to write a paper on all of this, probably for being cheeky, and it will go into a collection of contributions from the last COST meeting.

Must away now – lamb needs bottle-feeding.

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3. DU TEMPS PERDU
EN VOYAGE!

By our intrepid time traveller
John Wearden

Whoever said that it was better to travel than to arrive needs care in the community. My faithful travelling companion is a portable DVD player and endless episodes of “House”, a program I never otherwise watch, so now indelibly associated with trains and airport lounges. In January it was Liège in Belgium, the only town that figures in my dreams, to revise a QJEP paper and write a historical article on Vierordt. Work after lunch in a country that regards any beer weaker than Carlsberg Special Brew as alcohol-free has its own special quality, but if your mind functions at all, it focuses only on the important things. Researchers who can’t see the wood for the trees are encouraged to look again after a couple of Westmalle Triples (9.5%): things won’t exactly jump off the page at you, but if you’re lucky they might totter forward like drunks out of the fog.

After Liège it was a wet night in Daresbury, former home of the world’s largest van de Graf generator (the tower that housed it still stands), and soon to welcome the world’s brightest light source, for a “public understanding” talk. A 75-seat theatre could, they said, have been filled 4 times over, so great is the thirst for knowledge among Warringtonians. The audience consisted mainly of retired male scientists, still with pens in their top jacket pockets to jot down
any data that came to hand, and their wives, battle-wearied by a hundred evening lectures on physics, who perked up when they realised the talk wasn’t about magnetohydrodynamics.

Apart from showing the Keele flag at EPS (London and Cardiff, with Greg Goodson both times, and me talking about Vierordt) my other main trip was to Clermont-Ferrand to discuss joint research with Sylvie Droit-Volet, undisputed queen of the developmental Psychology of time, whose grant paid for everything, including the smallest hotel room I’ve ever seen. I travelled from pleasant spring to the height of summer (29 degrees), via purgatorial waits at airports in Manchester and Paris (will House never get in on with Dr. Cuddy? What’s the matter with him?). Three days of discussion in French left me with a little voice in my head whispering simultaneous translations of every word and thought. There were the usual delays in Paris (computer failure), so I watched a jumbo full of Japanese board within minutes. In contrast, the Manchester passengers passed through Guantanamo-standard security measures, with my (perfectly ordinary British) passport being scrutinized like a fragment of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The boarding process took considerably longer than the flight. Roll-on Seth Brundle-type matter transmitters! Just keep the flies out!

News from the Applied Group

During the Spring Semester the Applied Group continued to meet regularly. We had presentations from Group members on their current research and from visitors. Group members included Justine Drakeford who spoke on Recognition memory for neutral faces in depression, John Hegarty who spoke on Buying a piece of England – a shareholder survey of the Fordhall Community Land Initiative and Nicky Edelstyn who gave a presentation entitled A Neuropsychological Investigation of the Cotard’s Delusion.

The visitors included Helena Priest and Helen Dent who spoke on the DClinPsych programme and opportunities for collaboration and Martin Frischer from the School of Pharmacy who spoke about his Addiction research.

Following discussion within the group it was agreed that we would attempt to convene meetings with possible collaborators in Health/Clinical, Educational/Developmental and Social/Community settings. The aim of these meetings will be to develop potential partnerships and opportunities for our undergraduate and postgraduate students and also make people in the community more aware of the
wide range of research currently underway in the Centre.

In February Gaby Jacobs organized a two-day conference in The Netherlands as part of her research project on empowerment and participation in health promotion. The meeting was organized in collaboration with the National Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. It was the kick-off for an action learning program for health promotion professionals with 24 participants (the maximum) from different fields (mental health care, public health, homecare and youth services), 4 trainers and 4 researchers/organizers.

Maggie Robson will be organising a 2/3 day seminar on Play Therapy in a Play Therapy Institute in Athens, Greece (dates to be arranged) and will be also running a series of Play Therapy Certificate classes in Nairobi, Mombassa and Kisumu for the Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors. She has also been invited as a keynote speaker at the 8th International Counselling Conference of Kenya Association of Professional Counsellors, (4th- 6th September 2007) Nairobi, Kenya. Not only has she to contend with running the Counselling Masters’ Course, she has been invited to author two chapters in the new edition of ‘Key Issues for Counsellors in Action’.

Geraldine Leighton was granted an Arnold Bentley New Initiatives Award from SEMPRE for her project.

Nicky Edelstyn has been busy doing some detailed ethnographic work in the NHS. She also had time to get a few grants. She received £10k from the Parkinson’s Disease Society to fund the visual hallucinations study (recruitment is under way) and £9,142 from the North Staffordshire Medical Institute to fund a 3 month pilot study investigating source memory in parkinson’s disease. She also received £13,382 from the Neurosciences Trust to fund a project investigating Source Memory in PD.

Not happy with all of this Nicky is also a co-applicant on a programme grant submitted to the DoH, entitled Improving Life after Stroke (ILAS) for the sum of £2,000,000 for a 60 month period. The lead applicant is Dr Roffe who is a Consultant Physician with an interest in Stroke.

In March Michael Murray flew to the snowcapped hills of Nova Scotia for a meeting of the Canadian National Coordinating Centre on the Determinants of Health of which he is a committee member. He has also been busy submitting a large collaborative grant to the New Dynamics of Ageing initiative (with Ton Scharf, Roger Beech and Sian Maslin-Prothero). Besides giving talks at City University, Birkbeck College and Staffs Uni he also gave presentations in the seminar series for the Research Institute for Primary Care and for the Research Institute for Life Course Studies. He was appointed external examiner at both City University and the
London School of Economics. He has also just finished co-editing a special issue of *the Journal of Health Psychology* on Health psychology and The Arts (more details later) and several book chapters which should appear later this year.

At the end of March **Alex Lamont** spent a few days at Northwestern University, Illinois, USA at the invitation of the School of Music (Prof Ric Ashley). While she was there she gave a presentation to the school on her research on musical engagement (including some of Alinka Greasley’s PhD work), led a class on music psychology focusing on her research with infants and music listening, and gave a research methods seminar to the music education staff and postgraduates based on her ongoing research with David Hargreaves, Mark Tarrant and Nigel Marshall on children’s attitudes to music at school. She also had the opportunity to visit research facilities in the auditory neuroscience laboratory in the Department of Neurobiology and Physiology (Prof Nina Kraus) where there is a team investigating the long-term effects of music training on brainstem sensitivity to speech sounds.

She also went to a fascinating talk by Dr Josep Call about chimpanzees’ (lack of) theory of mind. Apparently most chimpanzee studies have used co-operative theory of mind measures, but the work Call and others are doing in Leipzig uses competitive measures because they hold more ecological validity for the chimpanzee social structure - such as competition over food between dominants and subordinates. They find that chimpanzees can understand other people’s psychological states, especially the idea of what someone else can see being related to what they know, but don’t have a full blown theory of mind.

Alex also attended the 7th Research In Music Education international conference at Exeter University in April, along with Geraldine Leighton and Jodie Underhill. Alex presented some more data from her ongoing children’s attitudes to music study, focusing on the reasons for why children do or do not opt to take GCSE music, and Geraldine and Jodie presented a poster of their forthcoming research on the contexts of music education. There were around 120 delegates who enjoyed a lot of interesting debate and discussion in the sunshine!

**Alex** also arranged for modifications to the MSc in Psychological Research Methods to highlight a stream in Applied Research. Hopefully, this will attract more postgraduate students.

In addition, The Applied Group has had discussions with members of the Department of Psychiatry and agreed to host a special meeting with them on opportunities for collaboration with that department. This
meeting will be held on June 27 – all are welcome.

The Applied Group were very pleased to welcome to their meetings psychologists who are employed in other departments in the university. These include Dr. Martin Frischer from Pharmacy and Dr Sue Hill from Primary Health Care. Hopefully this will open up further opportunities for collaboration.

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**Conferences**


**Invited Talks**


Murray, M. (2007). Research Seminar delivered at Birkbeck, University of London,


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**News from the cognitive group**

The last 6 months have been relatively quiet for the cognitive group. We’ve been slowly beavering away within our respective fields investigating context-dependent memory, false memory, recognition memory, prospective memory, language comprehension and processing, time perception and pharmacological/behavioural manipulation studies on general cognition. In the main, members of the group have been starting up new avenues of research, primarily with external collaborators, within Keele University (School of Health and Rehabilitation, Dr. Richard Stephens) and from universities in the UK (Bangor, Prof. John Wearden), (Lancaster, Dr. Karen Brandt), (Manchester, Prof. John Wearden), (Northumbria, Dr. Jonathan Ling and...
Dr. Richard Stephens), (Sheffield, Dr. Sue Sherman), (Southampton, Dr. Andrew Rutherford), (Teesside, Dr. Jonathan Ling), (York, Dr. Karen Brandt). Additionally, there are several noteworthy collaborations within Europe, with Berlin Technical University (Germany), Blaise-Pascal University (France) and University of Liege (Belgium) (Prof. John Wearden) and University of Magdeburg (Germany) (Dr. Andrew Rutherford). Hopefully we’ll have more to report on these research activities next time.

**From chewing gum to squeezing balls – food, exercise and cognition**

By **Richard Stephens**

I was asked to produce a short piece summarising what happened when I was invited to present some research that Richard Tunney and I published three years ago – on chewing gum benefits to cognition (Stephens & Tunney, 2004). The presentation was at a symposium on behavioural effects of chewing gum organised as part of the British Feeding and Drinking Group Annual Meeting. Sponsored by Wrigleys, the meeting was held at the other Newcastle. Arriving by train, I selected the theme tune from the film “Get Carter” on my iPod as we rattled across the Tyne. There was time for a quick dash round the shops in the city centre for family birthday presents, then on to the hotel, in the Jesmond area of town (very nice).

Our research was done on the back of student project work. We compared performance on several cognitive tests in the same individuals chewing gum or sucking a polo mint (both sugar-free), and having consumed 25g of glucose dissolved in water or just water. As the mechanism by which chewing gum aids mental performance is reputed to be increased cerebral blood flow, additive facilitative effects of the two treatments were predicted. Such effects were, indeed, found on tests of working memory, episodic long-term memory and language-based attention and processing speed. At the time ours was one of several studies showing gum-related cognitive benefits, although more recent work has not replicated these effects, particularly with respect to episodic long-term memory.

Chris Miles and Andy Johnson from Cardiff University have conducted several studies and failed to reproduce earlier context-dependant memory (word-list recall) effects, where the context is defined by chewing or not-chewing. In the course of examining these effects their studies also test the hypothesis that chewing benefits initial episodic long-term memory, regardless of context reinstatement. Miles and Johnson presented their findings at the symposium. Their research appears thorough – there’s no obvious reason why they should not
have replicated these earlier effects. Miles and Johnson’s research questions whether there really are cognitive benefits of chewing gum. Step up Andrew Scholey from the University of Northumbria.

Scholey, the symposium organiser, presented recent work showing that in stressful conditions salivary cortisol levels were lower when gum was chewed compared with not chewing. Intriguingly Scholey used cognitive testing as an IV to produce stress rather than, as is more usual, a DV. Salivary cortisol is a well-used biological marker for stress with lower levels signifying lower experienced stress. So, gum does appear to have some kind of beneficial bodily effect.

I also presented some recent work in which I’ve likened chewing, i.e rhythmically moving the jaws, to other kinds of repetitive movement. Some project students and I wondered whether cognitive enhancement would co-occur with another repetitive movement: hand-massaging a squuezy ball. However, there is a complicating factor. Sham chewing, that is, making chewing movements without having anything in one’s mouth, was found to show some cognitive decrements (Wilkinson, Scholey & Wesnes, 2002), probably due to a lack of familiarity with that task. This has been explained in terms of mental resources being diverted to maintain the unfamiliar activity of sham chewing that would otherwise have been used to perform the concurrent cognitive test.

As familiarity might be important, in our study some participants underwent ball-massaging practise. We hypothesised that ball massaging would improve performance in familiarised participants, and this was found to be the case on a task of spatial working memory. This finding was quite neat from a lateralisation perspective when one considers that the majority of participants would have been using their left hand to massage the ball, and a right hemisphere-associated function – spatial processing – benefited (Stephens, Garfitt, Little, Stanton & Taylor, 2006).

So, at the end of the symposium we are left to conclude that the notion that chewing gum can produce cognitive benefits is controversial, with certain earlier effects failing to be replicated. Assuming the original papers are not flawed in some fundamental way, it might be that certain conditions must be present for gum effects to be detected. I liken this to there needing to be a “driver” present, and this notion is consistent with Scholey’s data showing that chewing gum may ameliorate feelings of stress. One suggestion from the floor of the meeting was, as chewing gum is known to decrease thirst, initial dehydration could be that driver. Lowered arousal or tiredness is another candidate. There we have at least three potential student projects for next year!

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**Publications**


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**Conferences**


**Invited Talks**

Wearden, J.H Research seminars at Department of Psychology, London South Bank University, School of Psychological Sciences, Manchester University and Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, France, and a “public understanding of science” talk at the Daresbury Laboratory.

Brandt, K. (2007) Research seminar delivered at Psychology Department, Bristol University.

News from the Social Group

Over the past 12 months, members of our group have initiated several new collaborative research projects. Tracey Elder and Lucy Betts are currently conducting a lab-based study into intergroup and intragroup trust using a modified version of the trust game. Together with Jim Hartley and Mark Trueman, Lucy and Tracey have also recently submitted a paper for publication about the use of MCQ examinations in psychology.

Claire Fox and Claire Farrow are currently writing a paper for submission to Obesity Research on the link between overweight / obesity status and peer victimisation, and Claire Farrow and Mark Tarrant are running studies into the relationship between group norms, eating disorders, and perceptions of weight-related discrimination.

Martin Rowley recently presented a paper at the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Biennial Meeting held in Boston, MA. There were 7,000 attendees at this year's conference, which is SRCD's largest meeting to date. The paper was part of a symposium entitled 'Personal and Objective Truths: Understanding Subjectivity in Middle Childhood and Adolescence' in which evidence was presented from a variety of perspectives to challenge long-standing assumptions that young children have a precocious understanding of subjectivity. The symposium was a transatlantic effort with other contributors coming from the Universities of Warwick and Sussex in the UK, the University of California-San Diego (US) and the University of Saskatchewan (Canada). Martin was also successful in his application to ESRC with Liz Robinson (Warwick, principal), Sarah Beck (Birmingham (co) for a grant to support a project on: Children's handling of uncertainty: The influence of an unknown reality

Members of the group have submitted three applications for funding in recent weeks - Claire Farrow has submitted a grant to ESRC (£592,000) for a study on the determinants of maternal control of infant feeding and its relationship with infant weight gain and obesity. Mark Tarrant has submitted a grant to ESRC (£96,000) for an investigation into the relationship between perspective taking and prejudice, and a grant to ERAB (107,000Euro) for an investigation
into the link between social identity and alcohol consumption.

Four of our PhD students (Ana Paula Guerreiro da Costaare, Penny List, Sarah Rennison, and Chuma Owuamalam) are currently in the writing up stage of their training.

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**Publications**


**Fox, C. L., & Butler, I.** (2007). If you don’t want to tell anyone else you can tell her: young people’s views on school counselling, *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 35(1), 97-114.

**Conferences**


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**Invited Talks**

**Tarrant, M** (2006) Group members’ responses to criticism of their group: Does it matter if the critic is a group deviant? School of Education, Health & Sciences, University of Derby (November, 2006).

**Tarrant, M** (2007) Social identity effects in the performance of health behaviours. Department of Psychology, University of Kent

**Tarrant, M** (2007) Effects of member normativity on group-based responses to criticism. Department of Psychology, University of Kent.

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**In The Spotlight**

Featuring Tracy Elder and Susan Hill

This section of the newsletter gives us a chance to get better acquainted with some of the colleagues working in or working with members of the Psychology Department. In this issue we are introducing two relative newcomers, Tracey Elder and Susan Hill. Tracy joined Psychology in late 2006. Interestingly, Tracey was an undergraduate, postgraduate (as well as a Graduate Teaching Assistant) and now a lecturer here at Keele, so is obviously well equipped to give us an overview of the Department from these various perspectives. Susan, who works in Primary Care Sciences, frequently attends meetings of the Applied Group.

**Tracey Elder**

**You did your undergraduate degree at Keele, what did you enjoy most about the degree course. Are their any specific advantages to a doing a degree at Keele?**

I think I enjoyed my special option and dissertation the most. I loved being able to specialise in social psychology.

I think it was also the time when I really started to understand psychology in real detail and how to 'critically evaluate'. I think it just really
clicked for me in my third year and my marks increased as a result. I think when you are studying topics that interest you it is really easy to do lots of reading, which leads to a far greater understanding of psychology.

With regards to specific advantages of doing a degree at Keele the most obvious advantage is being able to study two subjects in equal measure. I did psychology and human resource management and it kept my options open. I came to Keele a little later than most having been at work for about 5 years after my 'A' levels. I had been working as an area personnel advisor and I had got to the point where promotion was not really possible without a degree.

So my intention was to get my degree and go back into human resources. However, I also enjoyed psychology at 'A' level, so coming to Keele meant I could do both. It was a good job I did! I was also drawn to Keele because the people are fantastic! You could not ask for a more relaxed and friendly place. I felt at home here the moment I visited all those years ago. I love the fact that everything is in one place and the green spacious campus is really inviting (although in the rain it sometimes doesn’t feel that way!)

**Have there been any changes or improvements to the course since you were an undergraduate?**

Yes, there has. I think one of the most important things is the introduction of SPSS throughout the degree. I really welcome this. When I was a student we learned a programme called 'minitab' in the second year and then in the third year I had to quickly learn SPSS for my dissertation, which was difficult. Now that students are exposed to SPSS earlier it means that they recognise the programme when they get to the third year and use the basics at least. I also think it is a great transferable skill for students to learn and some government and research jobs specifically request that potential applicants know how to use SPSS. I am a big fan of transferable skills for students and I think that it is increasingly important in the highly competitive job market that graduates find themselves in.

**Or could you recommend any improvements given that you have been a student at Keele?**

I think that we need to help the employability of students. I think the thought of finding a job is really daunting for students and often most do not know what they want to do when they leave. I will be looking after careers in psychology from September and I want to do all I can to help students increase their chances of finding a suitable job. In addition to giving students more information about different career options, I also think that we need to help students become more aware of the skills they have gained through psychology. Recent research conducted by the Higher Education Academy for psychology suggests that students are not really ‘selling’ their knowledge and skills to potential employers. I would like to take some steps in helping students to realise what they have to offer.
You were also a GTA at Keele, how has that experience helped you in your current post as a lecturer? Could you give a few examples?

Being a GTA is a fantastic experience. You really get to see the learning and teaching experience from both sides. GTA’s can be the bridge between the students and lecturers because you can really remember being a student yourself. Particularly for me as I was only an undergraduate myself a few months earlier! So, when I was a GTA I always tried to be as helpful and accessible to students as I could be. Whenever possible I always gave students examples that they could relate to and was careful to phrase things in a down-to-earth way. In my experience students respond favourably to GTA’s, especially when they can see that you really want to help. I hope the experience of being a GTA helps me to connect to students as a lecturer. I also think being a GTA gives you so much knowledge and understanding of how teaching works. There is so much preparation and administration that goes on behind the scenes that as an undergraduate I didn’t see or appreciate. For instance, writing a lecture often takes days and it can quite scary when you do your first lecture. Students do not realise the amount of time and effort goes into lectures; they just see the end product. Being a GTA makes you realise how much work is involved and develops the skills needed. I would never have been as prepared for my role as a lecturer if I had not been a GTA.

What is the main attraction that bought you back to now teaching & research at Keele?

There were many reasons for my return but the main one has to be the students and the staff. I think working with great people can make such a difference. At Keele the staff work together as a team and everyone is helpful and friendly. I find myself laughing and joking with staff and students on a very regular basis. I also find that even if I am having a bad day an enthusiastic student can really lift my spirits. You can’t beat the friendliness of Keele, in my opinion.

Do you see yourself here in 10 years time?

That’s a tough question. I would not be surprised if I was still at Keele because it is difficult to leave a place when you are happy. However, it depends what opportunities come my way. I think that you have to keep an open mind and see where life takes you.

Susan Hill
Where do you work?

I am currently employed within the Primary Care Sciences Musculoskeletal Research Centre. My current post is working within the ‘joint pain in older adults’ programme of work, and I am specifically working within the hand section of this programme. It is within this area of work that I completed my PhD and I continue to work.

What is your background?

Briefly, my PhD involved the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The aims of my thesis
were to investigate the illness perceptions of people with hand problems, and to investigate the impact that hand OA has at the individual level. These aims were met by carrying out a large epidemiological study of individuals with hand problems (n=2,113) across North Staffordshire, and by carrying out semi-structured interviews and a focus group enquiry with primary and secondary care consulters with a clinical diagnosis of hand osteoarthritis.

**What sort of research are you doing?**

At present I am writing-up publications from my PhD. I am also currently involved in the development of a musculoskeletal short-form illness perceptions questionnaire involving data from the epidemiological hand study and other databases within the Centre.

After many months of hard work we have recently received funding from the Arthritis Research Campaign (ARC) (March, 2007) to carry out a randomised controlled trial in the community. This work has been entitled ‘Self-management, joint protection education and exercise in hand osteoarthritis’, and at present I am working within a multidisciplinary team to get the trial ‘off the ground’. The two primary aims of this trial are to compare joint protection education delivered by an occupational therapist with no joint protection and to compare hand exercises delivered by an occupational therapist with no exercises in people with hand osteoarthritis.

**What else do you do?**

As well as my duties that are specifically research orientated I also:

- Teach periodically in the Faculty of Health, School of Health and Rehabilitation on the MSc Pain Science and Management Module where I teach ‘assessment of pain’ and ‘pain and behaviour’.
- Share my research expertise with clinicians in our Musculoskeletal Research Facilitation Group, a group set up specifically to engage local clinicians, for example physiotherapists and occupational therapists, in research.
- Supervise 4th year medical student undergraduate projects, which I have more recently become involved with.
- Carry out a number of administrative duties, including minute taking at our Hand Programme meeting.

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**Visitor(s)**

**Ari Vaananen** is visiting the Centre for three months (May-July) to work with Michael Murray. Ari is a social and health psychologist from Finland. He is currently employed as a senior researcher at the Finnish Institute of
Occupational Health in the Centre of Expertise for Work Organisations in Helsinki. He also enjoys travelling and has spent periods working at the University of Valencia, the University of Groningen, Memorial University Newfoundland, at the University of Exeter and in some research institutes.

Ari’s main work is in the area of occupational health psychology and psychosocial epidemiology, but he is also interested in social theory and social history. He mostly investigates longitudinal associations between social relations, work characteristics and various health indicators. For instance, in his current 18-year follow-up study he uses work-related (e.g., predictability at work, work-home spillover) and individual health resources (e.g., sense of coherence) as predictors of subsequent registered health outcomes such as myocardial infarction, diabetes, and depression. His work also focuses on the interplay between psychosocial factors and socio-demographic factors (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status) in the development of health/ill health.

Ari’s family will be joining him shortly. His office is in DH1.62 so drop by and introduce yourself.

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**Editorial Committee**

This newsletter was put together by Greg Goodson, Annelies van Goethem, Sue Sherman, Chris Woods and Michael Murray. Illustrations are by Louise van Goethem ([www.lowieswebsite.tk](http://www.lowieswebsite.tk))

The next newsletter is due out in the Autumn but don’t delay and get your submissions in now.

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