Welcome

A very warm welcome to the Candlemas edition of Link. We trust you will enjoy reading this semester’s selection of news from in and around the University. In particular, we hope that those of you whose sons or daughters will be graduating this summer have enjoyed sharing in the St Andrews experience and that your links with the University and town will continue beyond their graduation and into the St Andrews alumni community.

Warm wishes for a wonderful summer

Sandra Doherty
Alumni Assistant
Elaine Cartwright
Alumni Relations Officer

New Museum for University

The future of, and public access to, many of the University of St Andrews’ ancient artefacts will be safeguarded thanks to a near-half million pound grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Museum Collections unit has secured £449,000 from the HLF to allow the University to preserve and display some of its oldest and most significant collections in a restored coach-house next to the School of Art History. Further funds from the University and from a range of other bodies and private donations have brought the current funding total to over one million pounds, with efforts continuing to raise more to complete the project.

The new venue - to be known as MUSA (Museum of the University of St Andrews) - will house four galleries, an education centre (called the Learning Loft) and a terrace with panoramic views over St Andrews Bay. It is expected that work will begin on site this May and that the museum will open in summer 2008.

Emma Jane McAdam, the newly-appointed Project Curator welcomes the opportunity a central museum facility will create to show artefacts and specimens from all of the University’s historically significant and important collections together in one place for the first time.

MUSA will work with and complement the current displays and temporary exhibition space in the Gateway building and the zoological displays of the Bell Pettigrew Museum and, she hopes will appeal to all types of visitor - the local community, school-children and tourists as well as students and staff of the University.

Artefacts which will be on permanent public display in MUSA include the University’s three mediaeval maces, which are currently only on show during graduation ceremonies. Other items include the Thomas Chalmers window from St Salvator’s College Chapel, college silver, an oil painting by Scottish Colourist Samuel Peploe, stunning wax anatomical models and silver archery medals won by famous students between 1620 and 1750.

Commenting on behalf of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Colin McLean, Manager for Scotland, said: “This project will bring the history of the University of St Andrews to life. People will now have access to artefacts, some of which have never been seen before, which tell the story of the University and its place in the lives of students, staff and townsfolk. We are delighted to support a museum which will conserve and celebrate the history of this important seat of learning.”

The HLF award will also allow the University to attract new and diverse audiences by providing a launch pad for an ambitious, five-year learning and access programme. The programme aims to encourage greater community involvement in the creation of displays in MUSA and will act as a facility for training museum staff as well as a research centre for Museum and Gallery Studies. The learning and access programme also aims to reduce barriers to access by encouraging new audiences (especially primary and secondary school groups, local community groups, lifelong learners and audiences from across Fife) to visit the new museum and participate in specially-designed activities such as object handling sessions, art and craft workshops, talks, tours and performances in the Museum’s Learning Loft.

Entries are now being accepted for the MUSA Young Artist Award, a new annual art contest for schools in Fife, which is sponsored by the Vettriano Trust. This year’s competition, ‘Wild Things,’ invites school-children to create an original work of art inspired by the University’s Bell Pettigrew Natural History Museum’s weird and wonderful displays of birds, beasts, fishes, fossils and insects from around the world. The closing date for all entries is Friday 29 June 2007. Please see www.st-andrews.ac.uk/museum/art-competition/ for further information.
St Andrews Wins First Prize for Sustainable Development at the THES 2006 Awards

The University of St Andrews has been named as the UK’s top university for Outstanding Contribution to Sustainable Development. The Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) award recognises the University’s drive to become a leader in sustainable development by integrating policies and activities across its operational and educational activity. The award, made in association with Forum for the Future, looked for entries covering the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development, with proven achievement over the past year. Sarah Parkin, co-founder of Forum for the Future, said: “St Andrews’ partnership with students, along with innovative multidisciplinary teaching methods, a commitment to executive leadership and bottom-up engagement of staff and students, tipped the balance.”

St Andrews is charting the progress of the first student cohort taking a four-year interdisciplinary Honours degree in sustainable development. Nominees Charles Warren, Pat Wilmer and Jan Bebbington, who all serve on the degree programme’s management committee, received the award at a special ceremony in London in November. Charles Warren commented: “We are delighted to receive this award. Since June 2005, we have made some exciting progress in this area. Based on its research excellence and on the internationally-renowned St Andrews Prize for the Environment, the University is now becoming a sector-leading exemplar of sustainability in practice.”

Other contributing factors include the University’s far-reaching Sustainability Strategy and carbon budget and the successful achievement of Fairtrade status by the University and the Students’ Association.

Vice-Principal (External Relations) Stephen Magee, said: “This is a wonderful result for St Andrews. The University has already established its reputation as an environmental innovator. Crucially, the drive to make the University of St Andrews a leader in sustainable development has been across the board; executive leadership has been more than matched by student enthusiasm.”

Guardian’s University League Table

The University of St Andrews is the highest climber in this year’s Guardian University guide league table, jumping 35 places to fourth place. In the table St Andrews came third in English, Modern Languages and Maths. The Principal, Dr Brian Lang, commented “St Andrews students voted us the most popular mainstream university in the UK by dint of their responses to the National Student Survey in 2006 and this factor has played large in our very welcome rise in The Guardian league table. The quality of our teaching and research has remained consistently high and we are committed to major investment in our library and IT facilities in 2007 to raise our standards even higher. Given that we do not have the additional spending power and competitive advantage which tuition fees have given our sister institutions south of the border, this is a good result not just for St Andrews but for Scottish higher education.”

St Andrews was also one of only two Scottish universities to make it into the short list for the 2006 THES Best Student Experience award, coming second in the online survey in which 6,552 full-time undergraduates at 97 universities rated, amongst other things, lectures, courses, social life and the Students’ Union, environment, and community atmosphere. St Andrews was praised for its campus environment and student societies.

Official Opening of David Russell Apartments

Chancellor Gordon Brown visited the University of St Andrews in February to perform the official opening of the David Russell Apartments (DRA). The £34.7M three-year phased redevelopment, which represents the largest construction project undertaken by the University, is one of the most significant and ambitious residential developments ever undertaken by a UK university.

The new residence was developed especially to fit the needs of the twenty-first century, environmentally conscious student. Situated outside the town centre, DRA provides energy-efficient accommodation for 920 students and, outwith term-time, serves as a popular three-star alternative for tourists and golfers. In 2006, DRA was the first university residence in the country to be awarded the Green Tourism Business Scheme’s Gold Award.

During the visit the Chancellor met second and third-year students living in the apartments. Following a tour of the facilities and official plaque unveiling, he also visited the DRA bistro and met students and University representatives, including leading researchers in fuel cell technology.

The development forms a physical centre-piece to the University’s commitment to sustainability, with environmental and conservation issues being key to both the design process and the current management of the buildings. The development consists of a series of independent buildings clustered around central facilities, overlooking a man-made lake, which forms part of the sustainable urban drainage scheme. Green features include a rain-water recovery system, a comprehensive recycling programme, high standards of thermal insulation, sophisticated building management controls and underfloor heating. The entire development is enhanced by natural materials and light, and surrounded by high-quality landscaping. Uniquely, the building is topped by a grass roof, which acts as a heat insulator during the winter and a natural cooler during the summer months.

The flagship residence, the most environmentally friendly in the country, was hailed as an “innovative” development by the Chancellor, who said that he welcomed new state-of-the-art facilities for students and added that the innovative approach to the design and environmental aspects of the accommodation continues to place the University of St Andrews at the cutting edge of education throughout the world. “I would congratulate the University of St Andrews on providing these first-class facilities for its students and, as someone who campaigned for improved facilities when a student, it lets me see how far universities have come in recognising the importance of providing quality accommodation.”
### £77M for Life Sciences in Scotland

The University of St Andrews is one of six Scottish universities collaborating with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to invest £77.4 million to transform biology and life sciences research in Scotland. The six universities are to pool their research excellence in the new Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA). Eighteen new research posts and twenty-four support posts will be created at the universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews and Strathclyde. An investment of £27 million from SFC and £57 million from the universities will, over five years, attract new academic staff to strengthen this critical research area, key to the health and wealth of Scotland.

The initial areas SULSA will strengthen through its collaboration will be: cell biology (the study of the basic unit of life); systems biology (using computers to model groups of molecules, groups of cells and even whole organisms); and translational biology (the application of biological knowledge to develop medicines and other therapies for eventual clinical use).

St Andrews is involved mainly in the area of translational biology and hopes to attract a key researcher involved in the discovery of novel drug targets and the development of new medicines.

### 'Sticking Plaster' will Revolutionise the Treatment for Skin Cancer

Researchers at the University of St Andrews and Ninewells Hospital, Dundee have developed a new light-emitting ‘sticking plaster’, which will revolutionise the treatment of skin cancer. The new device, which builds on established photodynamic therapy treatment (PDT) methods, not only reduces pain, but also has the potential to be used by patients in their own home. PDT is a two-step process involving the application of a photosensitive drug, followed by controlled exposure to a selective light source, which activates the drug and destroys the diseased cells.

The breakthrough, a portable lightweight light source powered by a pocket-sized battery, is the brainchild of St Andrews physicist Professor Ifor Samuel and dermatology consultant Professor James Ferguson, Head of the Photobiology unit at Ninewells Hospital, Dundee, who teamed up four years ago to combine their expertise in photo-physics and photodynamic therapy to create a new way of treating skin cancer. The result is a ‘light bandage’, which contains its own light source and is so portable that patients can go about their daily business while under treatment. Professor Samuel likens the treatment to a patient wearing a sticking plaster and carrying the battery like an iPod.

### Dr Adrian Finch and Dr Nicola Allison

Dr Adrian Finch and Dr Nicola Allison from the University’s School of Geography & Geosciences, are one of seven groups of researchers invited to be part of the first wave on one of the beamlines at the new Diamond synchrotron facility - one of the brightest sources of light in the world and the biggest science facility to be built in the UK for forty years. It is hoped that the facility, the size of five football pitches, will enable scientists to find out more about the secret structure of the world around us. They will use the new £300 million facility to investigate one-million-year-old corals for clues of climate change.

Located in South Oxfordshire, the 235m diameter doughnut-shaped facility will be used by a unique cross-section of scientists, including those working in biotechnology, medicine, environment and materials research. Diamond will produce ultra-violet and X-ray beams of unprecedented quality and brightness, in the region of 100 billion times brighter than hospital X-ray machines. Prior to the new development, Dr Finch and Dr Allison used similarly powerful X-ray facilities at the Advanced Photon Source in Chicago to map variations in corals over small areas.

Dr Finch has used novel methods for the last ten years to examine the way in which coral skeletons encode climate change over thousands of years. Dr Finch, a crystallographer and an expert in mineralogy and materials science, and Dr Allison, a marine biologist, could together uncover information that may be helpful in predicting climate change in the future, by looking at the chemistry of corals.

The process of examining cross sections of corals can be likened to the processes used when ageing trees. Corals are sliced and X-rayed and each annual band holds information on age and climate. As corals deposit their mineral skeletons year after year, the trace elements in each band of the skeleton encode long-term sea temperature changes. By examining fossil corals, some of which are millions of years old, Dr Finch and Dr Allison will gain insights into sea temperatures in the distant past and understand more about how the world's climates have changed.
The Greatest Show on Earth

Researchers studying the largest single gathering of people on earth may have unlocked the secret of how large communities can live together in harmony. The psychologists from the University of St Andrews studied the largest crowd event on earth - the 30 million-strong Kumbh Mela in Allahabad, Northern India. In collaboration with researchers from the universities of Dundee and Lancaster, Professor Steve Reicher and Dr Clare Cassidy observed crowd behaviour at the Mela, a month-long Hindu festival held on the banks of the Ganges. The festival provides a unique setting in which to study mass psychology. As Professor Reicher explained: “As well as academically interesting, the Mela is visually amazing and an incredible event – like a vast biblical scene.”

While traditional research into crowd behaviour would assume that a large gathering of strangers would create a stressful effect, the researchers found that the nature of collective participation and shared identity appeared to have a positive effect on the crowd’s behaviour.

“Despite the fact that the Mela seems designed to increase stress in every way - it is very noisy, very unhealthy, very packed – what we found was that actually people feel serene, peaceful and unstressed. It raises very important questions about the nature of collective participation and how it can affect both individual well-being and social cohesion”, Professor Reicher said.

Professor Reicher and Dr Cassidy have been studying ‘the collective experience’ for the last three years, alongside Dr Nick Hopkins of the University of Dundee and Dr Mark Levine from Lancaster University. In order to overcome the many challenges involved in investigating such an extraordinary event, they also collaborated with colleagues from a consortium of Indian universities, notably in Delhi and Allahabad.

Their work overturns many common presuppositions about crowd behaviour and collective living; it would appear people become more generous, more supportive and more orderly rather than less. While Western research has always suggested that being crowded with strangers is a bad thing, the Mela shows that crowding can be highly positive as long as we share a common sense of identity with others. The Mela is much more than a wonderful spectacle. It promises to unlock the secrets of how large communities can live together in harmony.”

Thank You

We would like to take this opportunity to thank families for their support of the Family Book Fund, Student Scholarships and the Faculty of Arts Building.

The recent Spring UK Telephone Fundraising appeal has again been hugely successful, with pledges totalling £193,066. This year 50 students took part in the five-week campaign and spoke to almost 2,500 parents and alumni.

The US Campaign in November 2006 was also successful, with a total of US$45,748 pledged. Ten students called through the night from St Andrews to the US over a period of two weeks, and spoke to around 800 parents and alumni.

Student telephone caller Elizabeth Brough talked to us about working on the campaign: “I really enjoyed working on the campaign, not only is it rewarding to raise money for our University, but it is great speaking to parents who are so supportive of their children’s time here at St Andrews, and really interesting speaking to alumni about where their degree has taken them.”

Session Dates

2006/2007

Graduation: Tue 19th June 2007 – Fri 22nd June 2007
Re-Assessment Diet: Medicine Mon 27th August – Fri 31st August 2007

2007/2008

Pre-Sessional Week: Week commencing Mon 24th September 2007
Reading Week: Week commencing Mon 12th November 2007
Raisin Monday: Mon 26th November 2007
Graduation: Fri 30th November 2007
Revision Period: Commences Mon 7th January 2008