Welcome

A warm welcome to the Candlemas edition of Link. We are delighted to bring you this semester’s selection of news, which includes the Installations of our new Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Dr Louise Richardson, and of our new Rector, Kevin Dunion. For those families whose students graduate in the summer, we trust you have enjoyed participating in the Family Programme, and we hope you will maintain your links with the University and with St Andrews.

With best wishes for a lovely summer.

Sandra Doherty
Alumni Assistant

Elaine Cartwright
Alumni Relations Officer

Installation of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Over 1000 students, staff, alumni, guests and members of the public gathered for the Installation of Dr Louise Richardson as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of St Andrews on 25 March. Dr Richardson was first installed as Principal by Professor Eric Priest, a senior member of Senate, then as Vice-Chancellor by University Chancellor Sir Menzies Campbell. Having officially donned the robes of office, Dr Richardson then addressed a packed Younger Hall. In her address, entitled Journey through Continuity and Change Dr Richardson spoke of the University’s “long and distinguished history” and her role in its future. “I am energised by the task ahead and I am deeply committed to the continued success of this extraordinary University.” She continued, “The past, rich, resonant and inspiring as it is, is just the platform on which we have to build the future… We must forge a future worthy of our past on which our successors can in turn look back with pride.” Dr Richardson concluded, “The early founders established a university here to ensure that Scotsmen would receive an education at least as good as the best available in the world. All had ambitions beyond themselves. And so must we. We inherited this legacy, this reverence for intellectual inquiry, constant questioning, and the search for improvement, the belief ultimately that truth is an aspiration, not a possession. We are temporary guardians of that legacy. We too must protect it and pass it on, enriched and strengthened for having been in our hands.”

The closing address was given by Baroness Williams of Crosby who referred to Dr Richardson as a “bold leader, courageous researcher and brilliant teacher”.

Following the Installation Ceremony, in Dr Richardson’s honour, the University staged Academic Panels comprising leading academics and thinkers from the UK and the US. These Panels addressed the challenges facing Science, the Humanities and Social Sciences in the twenty-first century.

Dr Richardson’s Installation Address can be heard in full at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/news/Title,31909,en.htm

Installation of the Rector

Kevin Dunion was officially installed as the new Rector of the University in a ceremony in Younger Hall on 3 March. Welcoming addresses were given by Principal and Vice-Chancellor Dr Louise Richardson, Andrew Keenan, President of the Students’ Association and Kathleen Patrick, a senior member of the University Court.

The traditional rectorial ‘drag’ took place the day before the Installation. The Rector was delivered into St Salvator’s Quadrangle on a 60-year-old bicycle, loaned by a local ice-cream parlour and commemorating his late grandparents who owned an ice-cream shop in Alloa. He was then ‘dragged’ around town in an open carriage by the University Blues, followed by students and student societies, stopping to visit student groups at different venues around town, and receiving gifts along the way.

Mr Dunion was one of three Scots in the running for the role, but beat off competition from Colin Fox and Sir Chay Blyth to win the election in October 2008 when 26 % of the full-time student population at St Andrews voted by single transferable vote.

Born in Bridge of Allan, and a graduate of the University, Mr Dunion is responsible for enforcing Scotland’s Freedom of Information law and is the first and current Scottish Information Commissioner. Prior to becoming Commissioner, he was Chairman of Friends of the Earth Scotland, for which he was awarded an OBE. Mr Dunion succeeds Simon Pepper, the former Director of the World Wildlife Fund (Scotland). The Rector’s Address can be found at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/news/Title,30698,en.html
Opening of Scottish Oceans Institute

A new Institute to promote interdisciplinary marine research was launched in March by Principal and Vice-Chancellor Dr Louise Richardson.

The Scottish Oceans Institute (SOI), on the East Sands in St Andrews, will lead Scottish research into the ecology and evolution of marine life, biodiversity, fisheries, climate change, the environmental effects of renewable energy, oil and gas, shipping and related industrial processes. It will also examine new and more effective ways of managing human behaviour and activity that will contribute to the maintenance of sustained productivity in the oceans. Dr Richardson referred to St Andrews’ long tradition of excellence in marine science that stretched back over 120 years. “The creation of the Scottish Oceans Institute opens a new chapter in the development of marine science at St Andrews and in Scotland…The SOI will be linked closely with other marine scientists around Scotland in a way that will ensure Scotland remains a major contributor to the exploration of global oceans” she said.

SOI Director Professor Ian Boyd explained how it will help underpin UK and Scottish Government Policy and provide offshore industry with sound advice about the seas around Scotland. It will “promote a unique combination of pure and applied research to build effective links between researchers and those who need the new information and ideas that come from the research. SOI will be structured to change quickly in its research focus to meet the needs of policy-makers, industry and the public.”

The Institute brings together over 300 staff from across the University from the Schools of Biology, Geology & Geosciences and Mathematics & Statistics, and builds upon the international success of the Gatty Marine Institute, Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU), and Centre for Research into Ecological and Environmental Modelling (CREEM).

Professor David Paterson, Head of the School of Biology, commented that not only does it present “new opportunities for researchers to work more effectively together to address current issues in marine science” but the initiative will “promote the development of the next generation of highly qualified marine scientists.”

The researchers’ interests extend from the study of deep oceans to coastal systems and from the people who use and interact with the sea to those researching the past, present and future biological and physical processes that make the oceans function.


card Research Assessment Exercise 2008 (RAE 2008)

According to the results of the 2008 UK Research Assessment Exercise, the University of St Andrews is one of the leading research institutions in the UK. The results of RAE 2008 revealed that:

- St Andrews ranks 14th in the UK for the quality of all its research across Science and the Arts and has significantly expanded its complement of world-class research;
- 94% of its research activity is internationally recognised and 60% is world-leading or internationally excellent;
- St Andrews has increased its number of research active staff by 40% since 2001, and submitted more than 92% of its academic staff for consideration in RAE 2008, making it one of the most research intensive universities anywhere in the UK;
- Key research strengths at St Andrews include Anthropology, Applied Mathematics, Chemistry (joint submission with the University of Edinburgh), English Language & Literature and Film Studies, with Philosophy and Physics & Astronomy both emerging as second top in the UK;
- In 2008, 19% of St Andrews RAE submissions were assessed at the highest level, compared to 10% in 2001.

Project Zambia

A committed group of eight students and five staff from the University has launched Project Zambia, a life-changing project aimed at taking not only health education and sport to the children of Zambia, but also providing them with education on disease prevention and emotional support, much of the support being given to AIDS orphans, many of whom are the main carer of their family.

In collaboration with the well-established, non-government organisation Sport in Action, the group of 13 will spend the summer living and working with communities in the capital city Lusaka, as well as in rural areas. It is hoped that the project, which is the first of its kind at St Andrews, will lead to a fixed programme of visits over the next five years. Where possible, the project will source equipment locally, providing jobs and income to the area.

Stephen Stewart (Director of Sport & Exercise) and Ian Gaunt (Sports Development Manager) have previously spent time working with children in Zambia through Sport in Action. They will be joined by fellow staff members Chris Lusk (Director of Student Services), Ailsa Ritchie (Director of Student Support), and Debby Sargent (Performance Sport Manager). The staff team share a wide range of expertise in counselling and sporting fields vital to the success of the project.

The eight students were selected on the basis of their outstanding achievements in the sporting field and voluntary work, and include the Captains of the Rugby and Water Polo teams, and a Nightline (confidential listening service) worker. To make the trip possible, the students are leading a large-scale fundraising campaign aimed at raising £22,000 necessary for the trip, with all funds going towards buying equipment and clothing for Zambian children, schools and orphanages, as well as travel and living costs for the group.

Project Zambia has the patronage of Melanie Marshall, an Olympic and Commonwealth athlete and former British swim team captain.

For further information, or to pledge support, please visit www.project-zambia.org
How accurate is your memory?

As a child, did you hate brussel sprouts? Do you remember such a preference or did your parents remind you afterwards, ensuring a lasting dislike of the vegetable? Or do you have a phobia in adult life, invoked by a memory from the past that no-one else remembers? Research by St Andrews psychologists shows that the human memory can be remarkably fragile and even inventive when it comes to remembering past events, often completely rewriting ‘autobiographical belief’.

Dr Elke Geraerts, a lecturer at St Andrews and associate of Maastricht University, has demonstrated that it is possible to change long-term behaviours by inducing false memories using a simple suggestive technique. In a series of experiments, researchers falsely suggested that participants had become ill after eating egg salad as a child. A significant minority of participants believed this to be true, and even four months after the study were found to avoid egg salad. Dr Geraerts commented, “We could use this type of suggestive therapy for treating cases of obesity or influencing dieting choices. It may be possible for people to learn to avoid certain foods by believing they had negative experiences with the food as a child.”

Previous research has induced false memories of more inconceivable experiences, including those involving satanic rituals, previous lives, and abduction by space aliens. Even though such memories may not be real, researchers say they can cause emotional pain similar to that experienced by those who genuinely have memories of a traumatic event.

The new study could have significant implications for recovered memories involving abuse. Previous research has claimed that it is possible for people to create false memories of being abused as a child when memories are recovered through suggestive therapy. Triggering such false memories can impact on future behaviour, such as seeking redress in adult life. The study is the first to show that false memories can be so persuasive as to lead people to change their behaviour, both in the short and longer term. False suggestions about childhood events can profoundly change people's attitudes and behaviour in adulthood.

The paper Lasting False Beliefs was published in the August 2008 issue of the journal Psychological Science.

The Perfect Putt

Thinking about your putting technique in between shots can make you play worse, not better, according to a new report. St Andrews psychologist, Professor Michael Anderson, in collaboration with Kristin Flegal at the University of Michigan, found that the performance of skilled golfers was undermined after they had consciously reflected upon their putting.

Eighty skilled and novice golfers were asked to practise a particular putting skill until they got it right three times in a row, and then spend five minutes describing what they did. They found the golfer’s ability to perform was seriously impaired when trying the same shot again, taking twice as many attempts to sink a putt, compared to golfers spending the same five minutes in unrelated activities. The researchers believe that this is due to verbal overshadowing, which directs the brain to focus more on language centres rather than the brain systems that support the skills in question.

Professor Anderson believes that this overthinking affects novice golfers less than skilled golfers: “This effect was especially dramatic in skilled golfers who were reduced to the level of performance of novices; novices, by contrast, were largely unaffected, and perhaps even helped a little.”

5 STAR Birthday! (By AJ Jenkins, STAR Station Manager 2008-2009)

Since its conception in 2004, St Andrews Radio (STAR) has gone from strength to strength and we will soon be celebrating our fifth birthday.

Run by students, for both town and gown, the radio station (based in our own studio) broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week during University term-time. More than 200 students are directly involved in all aspects of STAR from presenting shows on air, writing and reading the latest news to advertising and community work. Directly affiliated with the University of St Andrews, our sole aim is to offer students a unique broadcasting experience. Along with providing a valuable foundation for students hoping to take up a career in media, we also forge strong links with the community. Every week on air we host a Community Show, with many representatives from town organisations taking the time to chat on air and provide information on the services they offer.

Aside from the broadcasting aspect, STAR is also well known for its events and parties. Our music festival Starfields has become a staple social event in St Andrews. We have a massive online listening community, with around 21% of our listeners residing in the USA. Online interaction for us is vital and we do this through our ‘buzz the studio’ function and studio webcam!

STAR is supported directly by the University of St Andrews Students’ Association and the University of St Andrews, along with a host of local and national businesses. We have even had some celebrities offer their support, including Lorraine Kelly, Franz Ferdinand, KT Tunstall and Dame Judi Dench, as well as Radio 1 DJs Zane Lowe and Edith Bowman.

R-L: AJ Jenkins with Head of Production Walker Angel
Thank You

Thank you to the many parents who took the time to speak to some of our current students as part of our telephone fundraising campaign which took place over five weeks in February and March. We are delighted to report that a total of £252,500 was pledged! As well as being an increase on last year, the total is the highest reached since the University first began running telephone campaigns about twelve years ago. The money raised from this campaign will support a number of projects, including the new School of Medicine, Student Scholarships and the Family Book Fund.

We would also like to thank our American and Canadian parents who participated in our North American telephone campaign last November when a total of $30,000 was pledged.

On behalf of the University and the many students who have benefited from your generosity, please accept our sincere thanks.

Tell Us Your Story

To commemorate the University’s forthcoming 600th Anniversary, the online Your Story project aims to collect stories and perspectives on the University from a wide range of people with experiences of and connections to the University. We would like to take this opportunity to invite the parents and families of our students, as members of the extended alumni community, to contribute to this project alongside students, alumni, members of staff and other friends of the University. Whether it is an anecdote, memory, story, idea, picture, poem or thought, we would love to hear from you. Help us achieve our goal of collecting 600 stories over the course of the Anniversary by sending us your contribution, along with a suitable photograph. In addition to contributing to what promises to be a fascinating and valuable collection for future generations, your contribution will be seen as a great public act of support for the University.

To read the first batch of stories and contribute your own story online, please visit www.st-andrews.ac.uk/600th/yourstory If you have any questions relating to the project, please send an email to: 600th.Anniversary@st-andrews.ac.uk

Love From Home Service

Please see the full selection of goodies which can be ordered via our Online Order Facility at www.st-andrews.ac.uk/parents/FamilyProgramme/LovefromHome/

This very popular service allows families to send students cakes, chocolates and gift baskets on special occasions with a personalised message. Run in co-operation with local baker and confectioner Fisher & Donaldson, our online ‘Love from Home’ service provides a great way to deliver an encouraging word, a good luck message or a birthday greeting.

Deliveries are made to addresses in St Andrews during term-time, Monday to Saturday, between 8am and 1pm. Please allow at least 5 working days between placing your order and the delivery date. In the interest of security, we are unable to take orders over the phone.

2008/2009

Graduation: Tue 23 June 2009 – Fri 26 June 2009
Re-Assessment Diet
Medicine: Mon 31 August 2009 – Fri 4 September 2009
Others: Mon 7 September 2009 – Thu 10 September 2009

2009/2010

Pre-Sessional Week: Week commencing Mon 21 September 2009
Martinmas Semester: Mon 28 September 2009 - Fri 22 January 2010
Reading Week: Week commencing Mon 9 November 2009
Raisin Monday: Mon 23 November 2009
Christmas Vacation: Sat 19 December 2009 - Tue 5 January 2010
Revision Period: Commences Wed 6 January 2010
Examinations: Mon 11 January 2010 - Wed 20 January 2010

Further information for families of current students can be found at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/parents

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Latest news and other information about the University can be viewed at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk

The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland, No: SC013532