

Network

Brackenhurst Supplement

Nottingham Trent University Alumni Association

New vet unit gets the royal seal of approval

On Wednesday 16 July we welcomed a very special guest to Brackenhurst to mark the official opening of our state-of-the-art Veterinary Nursing Centre and Animal Unit. His Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex toured the campus, met staff and students and unveiled a plaque outside the unit. The important new £1.5 million unit – the first of its kind in the East Midlands – houses cutting-edge equipment and facilities, and will be the new base for students studying for Veterinary Nursing courses accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS).

Built with support from the East Midlands Development Agency (emda), the unit is already getting attention from prospective students nationwide for the fantastic learning environment it has created. For more mature students, or those already working in veterinary nursing, the unit also offers great opportunities for career development and life-long learning.

Professor Jenny Saint, Dean of the School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences, said: "The new unit is a fantastic facility which the University can be very proud of. We're looking forward to our students and staff making the most of everything that it has to offer, and we're



Professor Jenny Saint and Professor Neil Gorman welcome His Royal Highness The Earl of Wessex

delighted the Earl of Wessex could be here for the official opening."

The Earl wasn't the only special guest at the big event. Lord Lieutenant for Nottinghamshire Sir Andrew Buchanan was on hand to welcome him to the campus, along with children from Gunthorpe Primary School. Other dignitaries included Lord Soulsby – the only veterinary surgeon in the House of Lords

and a past President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Diana Gilhespy, emda's Executive Director of Regeneration, commented: "We are delighted to support what is the first veterinary nursing training centre within the East Midlands. Boosting the skills levels of our future workforce is vital to ensure a flourishing region."



Clare Oswin, Alumni Officer

Welcome

A warm welcome to this special Network supplement for former students of Brackenhurst, filled with news from the campus and its thriving School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences.

It was great to catch up with some of you at the 60-year celebration in June and share our plans for the future of Brackenhurst as well as update you on our

students' achievements (like a gold at this year's Chelsea Flower Show! – see page 2). It was an enjoyable evening, as you'll see from the photos on pages 3 and 4. Over the summer we've also had the pleasure of welcoming His Royal Highness The Earl of Wessex to the campus to officially open the new Vet Nursing School.

With your support, we're looking forward to watching Brackenhurst continue to grow. We're also keen to keep in touch with you, so please

keep your news, stories and photos coming in.

Happy reading and have a great summer!

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Brackenhurst team digs for gold at Chelsea

A Brackenhurst team scooped gold at this year's Chelsea Flower Show, thanks to a beautiful Shetland garden created under the leadership of lecturer and designer Sue Hayward.



The award-winning garden

It all began with a challenge set by Martin Anderson MBE, co-founder of the Motor Neurone Disease Association, who asked the team to create a garden to raise awareness of the association. His love of the Shetland Islands inspired Sue's design – based on a 1940s Shetland Croft house garden – and she enlisted staff and students from the FdSc Garden Design and Horticultural courses to cultivate plants and develop her plans.

Shetland's unpredictable weather and harsh salt winds make it one of the hardest places in the British Isles to garden, and the NTU design reflected this. To shield it from winds, an original croft façade was transported from Shetland, while the walls were topped with turf and wildflowers to protect them from weather erosion.

The islands' unique resources were also woven into the design, with a path made

from flat stones washed up on Shetland beaches and a fence made from driftwood – reflecting the fact that, with no trees on the islands, wood is scarce. Plants included Edmonston's Chickweed, only found in this part of the world, while a walking stick symbolising motor neurone disease leant against a wall.

Sue said: "We're absolutely over the moon. It was an ambitious design and we're thrilled to have been awarded gold. Everyone has worked so hard and the tension has been really high, but it's all been worth it."

Joy Mitchell, a final-year horticulture student, added: "It's been a real pleasure to have taken part. I love the design and I've enjoyed every minute of helping bring it to life."

Keeping an eye on the skies

With Britain's bird population in decline, conservationists have welcomed a new bird monitoring scheme at Brackenhurst. They're not the only ones – students are loving it too!

Working with the British Trust for Ornithology's South Notts Bird Ringing scheme, staff and students have set up a baited feeding station to attract birds during the early morning. Special 'mist' nets are then used to capture them, so the team can note their species, wing length and weight and fit an identity ring before releasing each bird completely unharmed.

Regular ringing sessions began in January and students have been heavily involved from the start, with several choosing to begin training as bird ringers themselves.

Christina Taylor, a first-year Wildlife Conservation foundation degree student, said: "It's great that we're given the chance to help conserve our country's bird population. I'm looking forward to completing my training and joining a scheme when I leave university to carry on this work."

So what have they found in the skies over Brackenhurst? Well, to date, 400 birds have been caught, including 116 yellowhammers – a species featured on the RSPB's Red List due to its recent decline in population. The information has also helped academics monitor the effectiveness of Brackenhurst's Countryside Stewardship conservation work.

"The data we're collecting seems to highlight the fact that our Countryside Stewardship scheme is working," said Dr Louise Gentle, Senior Lecturer for the School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences. "Our aim is to improve habitats for threatened farmland and birds, and we appear to be succeeding."



Yellowhammers have been found at Brackenhurst

Happy 60th birthday Brack!

On Saturday 14 June, over 300 guests gathered in a marquee on the main lawn to celebrate 60 years since the first students started at Brackenhurst.

Students from as far back as the 1950s mingled with current and former staff enjoying tours of the campus, a special reception hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, a barbecue and dancing.

Former student Charlotte Penrose (nee Forbes-Bell) from the class of 1989 said: "The evening was a fantastic trip down memory lane. It's super to see a positive spin on agriculture and rural enterprise. Former lecturer Jean Ashberry (nee Pierce) agreed: "It was lovely to see all the new developments, and that Brackenhurst hasn't changed its atmosphere."

Many brought their families along, like Sarah Jennings (nee Boyland) from the class of 1991 who came up from Oxfordshire: "It was great to be back on campus and meet up with friends old and new. Our girls thought it was great – maybe we'll see them here in the future!"

A new fundraising campaign was also launched at the event. Since 1999 Brackenhurst has received around £20 million from the University, Higher Education Funding Council and East Midlands Development Agency (emda). It's helped Brackenhurst make some really

important developments, but there's still much more to do.

Professor Jenny Saint said: "It was a delight to welcome so many former students back for this fantastic celebration. They all have fond memories of their time here and I hope they'll carry on supporting Brackenhurst as it continues to develop."

For more photos from the big day visit www.ntualumni.org.uk and click on Events & Reunions.



Professor Jenny Saint welcomes guests



Cheers!



Guests enjoy a celebration barbecue



Old photographs were on display at the event

Our lucky winners

During the evening a prize draw took place to kick-start the fundraising campaign.



Alastair Rennie receives his prize

The star prize was a Burberry bag, worth almost £2,000, kindly donated by NTU's Chairman John Peace and won by Rachel Shanks (Rural Economy 1956). She said: "It was certainly a surprise and came almost 52 years to the day since I was presented with the Miller Mutual Association prize for 'the student who has done most to further



Rachel Shanks (right) won the Burberry bag

the purposes for which the institute was established".

An original painting by local artist Penny Veys was won by former member of staff Julia Goodwin and her husband Brian. Julia said: "We were so pleased to win the painting. It's absolutely beautiful and looks wonderful hanging in our lounge. It's a



Julia Goodwin (right) collects her original painting



James Meanley accepts his prize

lovely reminder of some great years at Brackenhurst."

Other donated prizes included tickets to West Midland Safari Park won by Alastair Rennie (Agricultural Merchancing 1984) and a meal for two at the Waggon and Horses in Halam won by James Meanley (Agriculture 1989).

“ 81-84: Best time of my life. Long live Brack! ”

John Olifent (Agricultural Merchancing 1984)

Be part of our future

If you enjoyed your time at Brackenhurst, there's never been a better time to play your part in supporting its future. For information on making a difference, including donations, legacies and gifts of shares, please call +44 (0)115 848 8775 or email alumni@ntu.ac.uk

Remember, if you are a UK tax payer, 25% can be added to your donation if you agree to Gift Aid it. And from August 1, the government will give an additional £1 for

every £3 raised in a new university scheme designed to encourage giving back to education. So, if you gave £30 a month, the University would receive more than £50.

Every gift, no matter how large or small, can play its part in helping to ensure that Nottingham Trent University, and Brackenhurst in particular, remains an excellent place from which to graduate.

It's official – our courses are just what industry needs

Ofsted inspectors have been working all over the country to identify good practice in vocational education and training, and they've found it at Brackenhurst.



The results of the recent Ofsted post-16 good practice survey highlight the great work being done at NTU in agriculture, horticulture and animal care, with inspectors finding that our vocational courses give students the skills to meet industry needs.

Professor Jenny Saint said: "We're delighted to be mentioned in this report which highlights our excellent skills development – relevant for both the industry and preparing learners to thrive in this sector."

The inspectors visited over 100 institutions, looking at a whole range of vocational subjects. Interestingly, they found that across all of these areas, successful institutions shared similar approaches. The best had strong links with industry, related classroom teaching to workplace demands, had inspiring

specialist teachers and used practical activities, good support and visiting speakers to motivate students.

The example set by NTU could soon be making a difference in colleges and universities all over the UK. Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education, Children's Services and Skills said: "In conducting the survey, Ofsted aims to highlight and share the very best in a vocational area.

"The reports provide examples where colleges are focusing on meeting skills needs and encouraging progression to employment and further learning in areas critical to the country's future. We are working with the FE sector to disseminate such good practice."

Student life starts at... 57!



At 57 Bob Lawrence is no ordinary student, but his decision to get back into education after 35 years has proved it's never too late to learn.

The part-time BSc (Hons) Zoo Biology student hasn't just been an inspiration to his fellow students – he's also been awarded a National Learning Works Award by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE).

As Director of Wildlife at West Midland Safari Park, Bob isn't exactly new to his subject. In fact, there's not much he doesn't know about newborn lions or foot and mouth outbreaks. So what brought him back to the classroom?

"After 35 years, it was a real challenge," said Bob. "The other students were a bit wary of me at first, and so were the lecturers. After all, I've been doing this job since before some of them were born!"

But even with all his experience, Bob still feels he has a lot to learn: "Your learning curve never levels out," he said. "Studying has been a real eye-opener. It's helped me to see my vocation in an entirely new perspective and opened up new horizons."

Bob was nominated for the National Learning Works Award by his course leader, Sarah Bottom. "His years of experience and approachable nature are a real asset for his fellow students," she said. "He's an impressive ambassador and a real inspiration to us all at NTU."

Rachel Thomson, Senior Campaigns Officer at NIACE said: "We continue to be amazed by the quality of the nominations we have received. Bob's story is an indication of how learning can transform lives completely."

Reunions

BOSA goes on tour!

Last summer, 29 former Brackenhurst students went on a special journey to western Canada. They flew to Vancouver and began their trip with a city tour, as well as visits to a local cranberry grower, dairy farm and fruit-growing farm.

They then joined the Gold Leaf Rocky Mountaineer for a journey through the magnificent Canadian Rockies, taking in Salmon Arm, the Kootenay Central Mountain Range – including dinner at

North America's highest restaurant – and Banff National Park.

Visits included Pincher Creek; a trout hatchery; a beef ranch; and the historic Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. They also visited local family farms before heading to Calgary to watch the stampede.

Rosalyn Sneath (Rural Economy 1957) said: "It was a memorable tour, enjoyed by all, and it was nice to get away from all the bad weather back home too!"



The group set off on their Rocky Mountaineer adventure

Find friends online

A new, improved online community exclusively for former students is here! It allows you to search for friends, take part in discussions, add photos, get involved in professional networking groups and maintain your personal profile – all in a secure, password-protected environment. Visit www.ntualumni.org.uk to find out more.

If you need some help tracking down old classmates, we might be able to help you. Just let us know who you're looking for and, if we're in contact with them, we'll let them know how to get in touch with you.

However, we are still missing details for some former students – which means they're missing out on NTU and Brackenhurst news! If you can help us re-establish contact with some of your friends, please call us on +44 (0)115 848 8777 or email alumni@ntu.ac.uk

230 tuck into BOSA reunion lunch

Every year more and more former students and staff join the annual Brackenhurst Old Students Association (BOSA) reunion lunch. This year was no exception with 230 former students, staff and their guests getting together to catch up. Organiser Jill Lewis (Rural Economy 1954) said: "We look forward to this date every year. It's a great opportunity to meet up with old friends and we welcome any former Brackenhurst students to join us."

Next year's BOSA lunch will be on Sunday 15 March 2009 at the Cedric Ford Pavilion on Newark and Notts Showground, in Winthorpe near Newark. To find out more, contact Jill Lewis via the Alumni Office on +44 (0)115 848 8777 or at alumni@ntu.ac.uk

Obituaries

Sydney Alexander (Agriculture 1948)

Much-loved husband of Olive, Syd died in November 2007. Syd joined Brackenhurst in 1949 as the Animal Husbandry Lecturer, later helping to organise the apprenticeship scheme in Nottinghamshire. He left in 1968 to become National Training Advisor with the Agricultural Training Board in Kent – a post he held until 1982. He was then appointed to the Youth Training Scheme in Maidstone where he stayed until retiring in 1989. Syd was Vice President of Brackenhurst Old Students Association

and enjoyed several trips abroad with members. In his home community of Harrietsham, he served on the Parish Council for eight years and co-ordinated schemes to enhance the village's appearance. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

It is with sadness that the Alumni Office reports the deaths of:

Glenn Bates (Agriculture 1957) who passed away on 2 May 2008 and Roger Radford (Agriculture 1957) who passed away on 17 July 2008.