

THE SUSS-EX CLUB

NEWSLETTER No. 36 February 2016

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Forthcoming Events

Monday 22 February 10.45 Royal Pavilion Exotic Creatures

Following our successful visit to the Royal Pavilion in April 2014 we have another event on Monday 22 February. The curator Dr. Alexandra Loske will host a gallery visit for us and will give a connoisseurs tour of her exhibition on Exotic Creatures.

See the exhibition website: <http://brightonmuseums.org.uk/royalpavilion/whattosee/exotic-creatures/>

We shall assemble at the Royal Pavilion (main entrance by the ticket office) at 10.45 for a start at 11 am. Alexandra will give a short introductory talk and bring along some extra exhibits. She will then take us round the exhibition. After an hour or so we can repair to the Pavilion Tea Room for refreshments and Alexandra will join us there.

As the exhibition space is quite small we shall have to limit numbers to 15, so please reserve a space early by contacting Steve Pavey. Email address is S.P.C.Pavey@sussex.ac.uk; text/mobile is 07742 528945; landline is 01273 822684.

The only cost will be the entrance fee to the Pavilion. The full price is £11-50; the over 60s rate is £9-50; the Brighton & Hove residents' rate is £5-75 (bring proof of residence) and Pavilion/Museum members are free. These tickets are all some 10% cheaper if booked in advance online. **Please make your own arrangements to get your admission ticket, either online or at the ticket office on the day. We are sure this will again be a fascinating visit with a first class host.**

Saturday 5th March 7.30 pm Roedean School Lysistrata

We are also promoting an evening visit to see a performance by a local professional theatre company who specialise in modern versions of Greek drama.

Brighton based Actors of Dionysus (<http://www.actorsofdionysus.com>) are doing a Spring tour of Lysistrata and the only chance to see this in Brighton is at the delightful little theatre at Roedean School. More information is on the website.

Lysistrata is a bawdy comedy by Aristophanes and was first staged in 411BC. It is the comic account of one woman's extraordinary mission to end the Peloponnesian War, as Lysistrata convinces the women of Greece to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands as a means of forcing the men to negotiate a peace. Some consider it his greatest work.

Tickets are obtainable at <http://boxoffice.roedean.co.uk> (01273 667655) and this is a rare opportunity to combine a visit to Roedean School Theatre with some comedic Greek drama. We are not organising a group outing on this occasion as there are no suitable pre-theatre supper venues near Roedean, but we look forward to welcoming theatregoers on the night.

Wednesday 23 March 2-4 pm Arts A108 Dementia and its treatment: emerging challenges and responses

These days there are frequent stories in the newspapers about the increasing prevalence among older people of dementia, particularly Alzheimer's, and the problems caused by this for both sufferers and their families and friends; some of us will know about this from personal experience in daily life. In the university medical school there are a number of researchers working on aspects of the subject, and we are lucky to be able to invite them to tell us something about their work. We have organised a meeting on this, on Wednesday, March 23rd from 2-4 p.m., in Arts A 108. (The room is on the first floor, and there is a lift.) This occasion is a new kind of activity for Suss-Ex, and, since it is potentially of wide interest, non-members too are invited to attend; bring your interested friends? There is no charge for attendance.

We have two expert speakers. Sube Banerjee, who is Professor of Dementia, will speak first. He will discuss dementia as an emerging global health priority, including data on its epidemiology, projections of numbers and costs, and national and international policy responses. His research focuses on quality of life in dementia, evaluation of new treatments and services, and the interface between policy, research and practice. Dr Naji Tabet is Senior Lecturer at the [Centre for Dementia Studies](#). He delivers a Memory Assessment Service for patients with memory complaints, and works in the diagnosis and treatment of dementia disorders; his research is on identifying factors such as lifestyles and physical illnesses that may slow the disorders' progression.

There will be some time for questions and discussion, and a tea break between the talks.

To make practical arrangements we need to know how many people to expect, so if you are coming please let Jennifer Platt know, by e mail (j.platt@sussex.ac.uk), telephone (01273 555025) or post (98 Beaconsfield Villas, Brighton BN1 6HE), to reach her by **Tuesday 22 March**.

Recent Suss-Ex Activities

Talk by Nick Tucker

On October 9, Nick Tucker, Hon. Sr. Lecturer in Cultural Studies at the University, spoke to Suss-Ex members about the history of children's literature. His talk took in early readers, self-improving texts and the start of the liberation of the imagination that came with Lewis Carroll. Nick noted stories' social class barriers, only really addressed with children's libraries and the advent of cheap paperbacks. Yet during all that time there was always a less respectable alternative, from "chap books" to "penny dreadfuls" and comics. These entertained all classes but were usually condemned by parents and teachers. Today, both types of literature - the high and the low - are closer to each other than ever before. After responses from an appreciative audience and comments from Nick, there was a buffet dinner.

Arnold Goldman

2015 Christmas Party

A very successful Christmas Party was held on Thursday 17th December. This was a joint event for members of Suss-Ex and USPAS (the University of Sussex Pension and Assurance Scheme). Because of the popularity of this event and the need to accommodate the large numbers, the event was held this year in the banqueting area of the Conference Suite in Bramber House rather than in the previous venue of the Meeting House. 168 people attended with 55 of these being members of The Suss-Ex Club and 113 belonging to USPAS. A splendid buffet lunch was provided by the Catering Service and we all enjoyed sitting down at lunch at one of the large circular tables talking to old friends. We are grateful to the University for its generosity in helping to make this such an enjoyable and successful event.

Colin Finn

Research Contributions by Retired Staff

For several years we have collected in January a list of retired members' research and related activities for the previous year. The reason for doing this is that many Suss-Ex academic members are, while notionally retired, still active in research, for which some access to university facilities is required. The extent to which our needs are met can vary from one part of the university to another, and sometimes, as a minority group, we simply get forgotten. Our contributions to the University's research output will continue to be of value. It seems likely that it will always be advantageous to those of us who wish to maintain our relationship with the research life of the University for our contributions to be noted. We are now compiling the record for calendar year 2015.

Please, therefore, send in, with your name and subject group affiliation, a list of your 2015 activities. These could include:

- publications,
 - conference papers and invited talks given,
 - fellowships,
 - prizes and honours,
 - new grants,
 - research students completing,
 - officerships in learned societies,
 - refereeing, doctoral examining, etc.,
- even if notification of them has already appeared in the Bulletin.

This should if possible be done by email, please, and sent to j.platt@sussex.ac.uk as soon as convenient; we plan to include all the reported activities in a consolidated list in the next newsletter, and may use the list in club publicity.

Obituaries

The following obituaries have appeared recently in the *Bulletin*.

20.11.2015 Michael Balmond, Postgraduate Admissions Coordinator
29.01.2016 Professor Laurence Lerner
06.02.2016 Professor John Murrell
All may be accessed from the University website.

Either go to <http://www.sussex.ac.uk>, click on A-Z, then S, then Staff – The Suss-Ex Club (former staff). Scroll down to Miscellany and click on the first item to get an alphabetical list, which also gives links to obituaries published in national and international newspapers and journals.

Or go to <http://www.sussex.ac.uk>, click on A-Z, then B, then Bulletin, then 2015-2016. Click on the date given above and then the name of the person you are seeking.

Laurence Lerner (1925-2016)

I don't think I ever told him, but one of the reasons I applied to the newly-formed University of Sussex in the winter of 1962 was that Larry was teaching there. In those days you couldn't open a weekly like *The Listener* or *The New Statesman* without finding a poem or a review in it by Larry. He had also, I discovered, recently published a volume of poetry, *Domestic Interiors*, a novel, *The Englishman*, and a book of literary criticism, *The Truest Poetry*. If Sussex are happy to employ someone like that, I thought, then it's the place for me.

And indeed it was. Larry was only one of a galaxy of brilliant and individual minds assembled by David Daiches in those early years. Gãmini Salgãdo had rejoined Larry from Queen's University, Belfast, and Stephen Medcalf arrived at the same time as I did to rejoin *his* old Merton friend, Tony Nuttall. I recall the laughter of those years most of all, Tony

Nuttall's large guffaw and the strange but compelling sound that told you the philosopher Ricky Damman was present. Larry laughed less but he was always smiling and he was always at the centre of any gathering, talking, arguing, endlessly quoting (he and Stephen seemed to have an uncanny ability to remember whole poems verbatim, and not just in English). The quip went in those days that it was no wonder the University of Sussex was able to attract the best students since it included luminaries with such names as Supple, Lively and Lerner.

Larry was born in South Africa in 1925 of a Jewish Ukrainian father and an English mother. He attended schools in Cape Town and then the University of Cape Town. On a camping trip in 1945 he met Natalie, and they both promptly won scholarships to Cambridge, where Natalie studied for a Ph.D and Larry (typically) for a second BA. They married in 1948, and, after a spell at the new University of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), they returned to Britain and Larry found a job at Queen's, Belfast, where Seamus Heaney and Seamus Deane were among his students. Attracted by the interdisciplinary nature of the new University of Sussex, he applied and was taken on in the University's second year, 1962. In the course of his many years at Sussex, though, he was frequently absent, taking up temporary teaching posts in France and Germany (he wanted to be able to speak and read the languages, and soon did), the USA and Canada. By 1985, disliking the increasingly antagonistic politics of the era, and, like so many distinguished scholars of his generation that Sussex foolishly got rid of, having been persuaded that if he stayed he was hindering younger scholars in the development of their academic careers, he joined his friend and fellow-poet Donald Davie at Vanderbilt in Nashville, Tennessee. On retiring from there in 1995 he moved to Lewes, teaching more than ever on various adult education courses, walking the Downs with his friends and active in the Quaker community.

I once asked Larry why, since he was such a fine poet, he did not devote more time to it. If I did nothing else, he replied, I would probably not write poetry either. Certainly his manifold activities did not seem to stand in the way of his poetry: eight further volumes followed *Domestic Interiors*, all full of well-crafted, highly intelligent, often funny and often moving poems. Never flashy, he was, like Edwin Morgan, the master of many forms: dramatic monologues such as the brilliant and disturbing 'The Merman' and 'Written from Ypsilanti state hospital'; 'Movement' poems such as one of his favourites, 'Strawberries'; and formal experiments (though he would never have called them that or thought of himself as an experimental poet) like the poems that make up his book *A.R.T.H.U.R.*, ostensibly written by a machine. Though in later life he liked to assert that he no longer wrote poetry, only verse, there are a few poems he sent me but never published which I cherish, such as the subtle and hilarious 'Let's Play Philosophy', which begins with:

I've often wondered if we humans can
Explain just why the universe began.

And reaches a climax with

Perhaps
Thinking is just the way the brain cells lapse
When things go wrong. Nobody understands
Why we can only walk on feet, not hands,
Why ears can't see and eyes can't hear, or why
The price of living is you have to die.

Sadly, and, to me inexplicably, he seemed to go out of fashion when he moved to the States. The friends who had been poetry editors of magazines and publishing houses retired and a new generation took over who did not know him and were not interested in what he had to offer. I wonder if he made much of an effort to get his work published. I suspect not. But I feel it's a shame and hope very much that one of these days we may see a *Selected Poems of Laurence Lerner* on the shelves. Such a volume would only confirm what all his admirers know, that his work is among the best produced in the English language in the second half of the twentieth century.

Gabriel Josipovici

Christopher Baxter (1938–2015)

Chris was born in Kettering, Northants on 26 June 1938 and grew up at his parents' house in the nearby village of Rothwell. His father was a foreman in a boot and shoe-making factory there. His mother had worked in a factory in another village, making blazers, before she had her three children.

When Chris was two he contracted diphtheria and scarlet fever. He was sent to an isolation hospital for six weeks, where his parents never visited. In those days the parents were not encouraged to visit, for the sake of their other children—and there was a war on. An aunt visited occasionally.

Chris recovered very slowly at home. He had forgotten how to play, was angry with his parents and developed a secret language with his twin sister, which he spoke until he started at the village school, which he enjoyed.

In 1949 the twins took the eleven-plus examination, which all children in state primary schools took, to establish which state secondary school they would go on to. Chris passed and went to Kettering Boys Grammar School. Wendy failed and stayed on at the village school, a secondary modern, leaving at fifteen to live in the nurses' home in Kettering to do her State Registered Nursing training.

The Grammar School suited Chris. He excelled in all subjects and in cross-country running. His elder brother had studied for science A-levels and became a pharmacist from London University. Chris took French, German and History A-levels and went on straight from school to read for a BA in French at University College London. He had spent only three weeks in France before he started the degree course, but his methodical approach to language learning and French literature served him well in examinations throughout the three years. He graduated with First and a special prize from the University for distinction in his studies.

Chris's degree studies were funded by a State Scholarship. During his vacations he worked as a travel courier for a coach company called Global Tours, who took tourists to French- and German-speaking countries. It was a well-paid job for university linguists who were English and needed to support themselves in their vacations.

When he had finished his degree Chris became an English "assistant" at the Lycée Chaptal, Boulevard des Batignolles in Paris for a year before he married Valerie, whom he had met at University College London.

They lived in Paris, at the Maison Néerlandaise at the Cité Universitaire, Porte d'Orléans. It was then the only Hall of Residence which accepted married students and then only four

couples. Chris now had a post of “lecteur” at the Sorbonne. He taught very large prose and translation classes at the Odéon. Valerie taught classes of young men at a school of commerce owned by the Paris Chamber of Commerce. They had a language laboratory, unlike the Sorbonne!

They both taught the sales personnel at the Galeries Lafayette, in two rooms up in the roof. They travelled around Paris, and France, on their Lambretta, bought from a council estate at Bondy. They ate at the Restaurant d’Outre-Mer, where the students were mainly Algerian and the cuisine was North African. Very delicious for English students brought up with ration books and the occasional tin of spaghetti. Algeria was French in 1960 but the struggle for independence and the Battle of Algiers were not far off.

Chris went regularly to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris to read a work by the sixteenth century writer Jean Bodin, *Heptaplomeres*. He had been encouraged to study it for a PhD by his mentor at University College and then at the Warburg Institute, London, Dr Perkin Walker. The seven wise men of the title all had different religions. The most eminent modern French scholar, a Catholic, held that the Catholic Christian won the argument. Chris wanted to show that this was mistaken, that the Jew won. Chris himself was atheist.

In 1963 Chris became an Assistant Lecturer in French in the School of European Studies at the University of Sussex. He met Peter France at the interview, where both were appointed. Baxters and Frances become firm friends.

In 1964 the first two Park Houses for student accommodation were complete. The campus was a building site. All administration was in Stanmer House, a short walk over the hill. The University wanted a married couple to be in charge of the student committee which ran each Park House. They asked the Baxters and the Frances, all in their twenties and with a baby in each family. The Baxters lived in the bungalow attached to Norwich House. Their son, Tom, was born there in 1966. It is now (2015) the University Crèche. The Frances lived in a ground-floor flat in York House. Norwich House was the men students’ Park House; York House was for the women. Single sex only in 1964. In 1964 any student wanting to leave a Park House for any weekend had to obtain an “exeat” from the Chairman of the Park House, who was *in loco parentis*.

In July 1966 the Baxters and the Frances each bought houses in Brighton. The University needed more student accommodation in town and had made a mortgage arrangement with the Alliance Building Society. The upshot was that the Baxters bought a very large villa which would house themselves, plus at least five university students. This arrangement worked very well for years. For a few months in the ’70s a family of Ugandan Asians lived upstairs, refugees from Idi Amin.

In the mid-1960s many university students and some members of faculty canvassed on the Whitehawk housing estate to get a first victory for Labour in the Kemp Town constituency. Dennis Hobden (Lab.) was duly elected after three recounts. The University was having a political effect.

In the later 1960s Chris Baxter joined the Rents Project in the west of Brighton. The aim was to reduce high rents in furnished flats. Chris would put the tenants’ cases to the Rents Tribunal near Preston Park. This usually resulted in a reduction in rent. The unscrupulous landlords were furious. They tried to wear Chris down by threats and phone calls in the early

hours. Chris was unfazed. He stood for the Town Council, as other university teachers did over the years. The University campus was out of town at Falmer but its effect was felt in town too. There was much debate and many letters to the editor of the Argus newspaper. Chris's younger daughter was born at the end of 1969.

By 1980 Chris felt disillusioned with his work at the University. There were some difficult years before he eventually left, taking early retirement on the grounds of ill health. The big house in Montpelier Villas was sold. He bought a charming smaller house in Camden Terrace where he lived quite contentedly by himself until shortly before his final illness and death, aged seventy-seven on 7 October 2015.

Valerie Baxter, November 2015.

Peter France writes

Chris and I were appointed on the same day. We took up our posts together in 1963, the University's third year, and were both appointed a year later to look after the first two halls of residence, Norwich and York House respectively. Little wonder that in his retirement speech our first Dean, Martin Wight, classed us among the 'twins' of those early days. We weren't perhaps as alike as that suggests, but we got on very well, seeing each other almost every day, and I have many happy memories of our time together.

Chris was a specialist on the French sixteenth century. After being awarded a First at University College, London, he had embarked on a thesis on Jean Bodin's mysterious dialogue of the sages, the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*. In the early days of Sussex, when research and doctorates seemed less important than 'redrawing the map of learning', it is not surprising that Chris did not finish the thesis. He was full of ideas, and threw himself into teaching, devising new courses (notably one on French Moralists) and student welfare. He remained committed to Renaissance studies, and published three valuable pieces in John Cruickshank's *French Literature and its Background*: two wide-ranging chapters on the French Wars of Religion (one of them much concerned with Bodin) and a lively, independent-minded essay on Montaigne. Later, he was able to expand his treatment of Bodin and the German demonologist Johann Weyer in two substantial chapters of *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, edited by Sydney Anglo (1977).

At the same time, echoing his involvement in Brighton politics, he (like me) was an active member of RadFac, a group of Sussex faculty inspired by the events of 1968, who discussed and championed ideas for the reform of universities in general and Sussex in particular. He was particularly concerned with imagining a new approach to examinations.

In the 1980s, when I had left Sussex, I learned that he had been seriously unwell and had taken early retirement for health reasons. He continued to live in Brighton, giving his energy to a number of causes. But I remember the young Chris, full of life, unpredictable in his enthusiasms and reactions, earnest at times, but with a wicked sense of humour (sometimes at my expense). He liked provoking people, and didn't mind if they found his actions surprising—in the days when he and I used to cycle out from Brighton to Falmer (arriving sweaty for tutorials), he would sometimes be dressed in a dinner suit 'so as to get some wear out of it'. He could be disconcerting, exasperating even, but he was fun.

Edinburgh, 11 January 2016.

John Mangold

John Mangold, the University's first Bursar, died on 23 November 2015. He was over 90.

Dr Geoff Lockwood, former Registrar and Secretary, writes

John was the founding Bursar at Sussex, having spent much of his career in the colonial services mostly in Africa. He was responsible for the management and development of the estates, property and commercial services of the University. Clearly, John Fulton, Asa Briggs and Basil Spence took the lead on site development but John faithfully implemented their decisions. The Refectory and the services in it is probably where he had his greatest influence. John was a quiet man and a loyal senior officer of the University."

Charles Goldie adds

John Fulton and Asa Briggs were the University's first two Vice-Chancellors. Basil Spence was the architect for the virgin site and the first buildings. The Refectory is the building later renamed Bramber House.

The University's *Fourth Annual Report, 1962–63*, reports that Mr J. Mangold, M.A., took up the new post of Planning Officer on 1st July 1963, and the *Fifth Annual Report, 1963–64*, notes that he became Bursar as from 1st April 1964. The latter document records that "for the future" the administration "should be directed by two independent officers of similar status—the Registrar and Secretary who would be in charge of the academic side of the administration and of establishment work; and the Bursar, who would be responsible for the business side (especially buildings and finance)".

At some stage, on or after John Mangold's retirement, the post of Bursar was dropped. Steve Pavey, former Finance and Business Director, reports that by 1979 there was a triumvirate at the top of the administration—the Registrar and Secretary, the Finance Officer, and the Community & Estates Officer.