



Biosciences evolves
Interview: Will Young
The audacity of hope

Contents

- 3 RAE results
- 4 Where in the world?
- 5 Stunning new central campus design
- 6 Economic meltdown
- 9 Research news
- 10 Interview: Will Young
- 12 The audacity of hope
- 15 I love my playpen
- 16 Discovering the past
- 18 Future thought leaders
- 20 Making a difference
- 22 Triathlon: the race of a lifetime



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I **believe that 2009** is going to be a year of challenge and opportunity. In August, I take over as President of Universities UK, the body that represents Britain's higher education institutions, at a time when many universities will be feeling the full pain of the global economic downturn.

Exeter is in an excellent position to weather this storm. In the last year, we broke our records for research income, student applications, international recruitment and graduate employment. We reached 13th in the UK league tables and were named University of the Year.

Our position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive universities was confirmed by the results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, the measurement of research quality. We significantly improved on the 2001 RAE, with nearly 90% of research rated at internationally recognised levels. All things being equal, we expect to get a sizeable increase in research funding.

When the results are adjusted for the proportion of staff submitted, Exeter ranks in the top 15 for research out of 159 higher education institutions. We deliberately submitted 95% of our staff to the RAE - 636 in total - a much higher proportion than most other universities. This was the right decision for the future, where quantity of research will count as well as quality.

We have achieved a great deal, but we cannot rest on our laurels. As I said in my last column, Exeter's aim is to be a top 10 university by 2012. This is an ambitious goal, and one that I believe we can achieve, especially with the continued strong support of our alumni and friends.

Financial prudence is important given the grim economic outlook around the world. I believe it will be those universities that invest for the future at this time of economic hardship that will emerge stronger in the long term. This is why we are investing £450 million in our campuses.

We are also putting internationalisation at the heart of everything we do. This may be a challenging time, but it is also a time of opportunity and for Exeter; a time when we can take great strides towards our top 10 vision.

Professor Steve Smith *Vice-Chancellor*



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A rising star for research

The University of Exeter's status as a research-intensive university of international standing has been reiterated. Almost 90% of Exeter's research has been rated at international levels, according to the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The results of the RAE will be used to distribute £1.5 billion a year worth of research funding to UK universities from August 2009. *The Times Higher Education* concluded that Exeter's strong performance showed that it was a 'rising star among research-intensive institutions.'

The University is ranked 15th in the UK for research out of 159 higher education institutions in terms of research intensity, when the proportion of academic staff are taken into account. As *The Times* highlighted: '...some universities with leading scores had declined to enter up to a quarter of their academics. Exeter University ...moved from 26th to 15th when all staff were taken into account rather than just those entered for the exercise.'

The quality of research at the University of Exeter has markedly improved since the last RAE in 2001. The RAE measures the quality of research across the higher education sector. RAE expert panels assessed more than 200,000 pieces of work from 52,500 staff.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter, Professor Steve Smith, says: 'These results show a significant improvement since 2001. Particularly pleasing is the increase in the amount of 4* rated research. We have achieved our targets in terms of research outputs and we will be looking to build on this result as we go forward.'

The RAE rates research across a five point scale ranging from ungraded to 4*. The higher the grade, the more research funding is achieved. Grades 2*, 3* and 4* denote ascending grades of international research quality. 34 per cent of research at Exeter falls into 2*, 39 per cent at 3* and 17 per cent at 4*.

“A rising star among research-intensive institutions.” TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION

Research-intensive

Exeter has shown significant improvements since the last RAE in 2001:

- 17% of our research is categorised as 'world-leading', 89% of our activity is at internationally recognised levels.
- Top performing subject areas were English and Drama, which returned 45% and 35% of research in the top 4* category respectively. On this measure, Exeter's English department is the best in the UK for research – beating Oxford and Cambridge.
- Accounting & Finance is second in the sector, as is Archaeology (4* and 3* combined). Classics & Ancient History are third.
- 16 of our 31 subjects are ranked in the top 10, with 27 in the top 20.

To see Exeter's full results, visit www.exeter.ac.uk/rae2008



Where in the **world?**

The number of international students registering on undergraduate courses has risen by more than 200% to over 270 students this year, it has been revealed. The University expects further growth in the future. International postgraduate taught recruitment is also up by 150%, which is significantly above target. The number of international postgraduate research students is showing notable growth from last year.

As the number of international students at Exeter has grown, the size of the University's worldwide network of alumni has become larger as well. We are in touch with more than 60,000 alumni living in over 150 countries. This means that there are

alumni around the world with stories of how Exeter has made a difference to their lives. 'Exeter equipped this small-town Pennsylvania boy with an ability to communicate, learn, and relate to people from around the globe,' says American alumnus Michael Clauser (MA European Studies 2006). Michael works at the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defence for Legislative Affairs, at the US Department of Defence in Washington DC.

For more information about our international activities, please contact Stephanie Ganeson, International Alumni Officer, on +44 (0)1392 262016 or email stephanie.ganeson@exeter.ac.uk

Global **alumni** network

Alumni can keep in touch with each other around the world, thanks to a new network of alumni contacts. Countries and regions with contacts include: USA, China, East Africa, The Middle East (contacts based in United Arab Emirates), Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand. For a full list, see www.exeter.ac.uk/alumni

VC to be President of Universities UK

Professor Steve Smith, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter, will be the next President of Universities UK. He will succeed Professor Rick Trainor, Principal of King's College London, on 1 August 2009 and will hold the post of President for the two academic years 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Professor Smith is very much looking forward to taking up the UUK Presidency. '2009 will be a year of changes for the organisation, and no doubt for the higher education sector itself, so it will be an exciting

and challenging time to be President,' he says.

Appointed Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter in October 2002, Professor Smith has been Chair of the 1994 Group of universities since August 2006. He has been Vice-President and Chair of UUK's England and Northern Ireland Council since August 2007. He is a member of the UUK Board and Research Policy Committee, and of UUK's Delivery Partnership Steering Group, which will implement the Government report on post-qualification admissions.

Stunning new central campus design



Award-winning international architects Wilkinson Eyre have been selected to design a stunning new £48 million centrepiece for the University of Exeter's Streatham campus. The Forum Project, as it is known, will enlarge and revamp the library, provide new learning spaces, retail and catering outlets, a University reception and a landscaped plaza.

The design for the project reflects the natural features of Exeter's famously hilly Streatham campus and creates a 'green corridor' connecting the Forum with the wider landscape. One of the key aspects of the design is an undulating timber gridshell roof, which links the surrounding buildings together in a covered open space.

David Allen, the University's Registrar, says: 'The University of Exeter has one of the finest campuses in the world; so it was vitally important to come up with a design which was both iconic and sympathetic to the landscape. Wilkinson Eyre have done a fantastic job of meeting this challenge.'

In excess of 40 architectural firms expressed an interest in the project and five went through to a design competition. Pending planning permission, it is hoped that work will begin later this year and will be completed by 2012.

'Our proposals seek to create a new arrival point for the University,' says Stafford Critchlow, Director of Wilkinson Eyre Architects. He adds: 'The sequence of spaces relate closely to the campus landscape, establishing a new architectural language which is less about placing objects within this landscape and more about an organic response to it.'

London-based Wilkinson Eyre has a worldwide reputation for design excellence. The practice has been awarded the coveted Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stirling Prize two years in succession: in 2001 for the Magna science adventure centre in Rotherham and in 2002 for the Gateshead Millennium Bridge. The firm's design for the Liverpool Arena and Convention Centre was commended in the World Architecture Awards in 2008. Other projects that Wilkinson Eyre are currently working on include a masterplan for the 14-hectare Apraksin Dvor district in central St Petersburg, two conservatories for Singapore's Gardens by the Bay and the Guangzhou International Finance Centre, China. To find out more about Wilkinson Eyre see www.wilkinsoneyre.com

The University's £450 million investment programme also includes £25 million in new Business School facilities, £18 million for Biosciences and a major investment in new student residences. The investment is a key element of the University's vision of breaking into the top 10 of UK universities by 2012.

Gateshead Millennium Bridge.
V Photographer: Doug Hall.



^ Magna, Rotherham. Photographer: Ben Luxmoore.



Economic meltdown

A few years ago almost no one except economic analysts had ever heard of the phrase 'credit crunch'. But with the world's banking sector in turmoil, the term, which means a 'severe shortage of money or credit' has become part of everyday language. What is not so well understood is what it actually means and why the credit crunch has caused ripples of economic panic to spread around the world.



^ Scott Olson / Getty Images News / Getty Images

The origins of the global financial crisis can be traced to the credit crunch caused by the sub-prime mortgage market in the United States, explains Professor George Bulkley, Professor of Financial Economics at the University of Exeter's Business School.

'At a time when house prices were rising and rising, many US banks in the search for business handed out risky loans to individuals who couldn't afford them and had poor credit histories,' he says. The loans were then packaged together in portfolios, known as Collateralised Debt Obligations (CDOs), with other assets and bonds.

'The problem was that this hid the true extent to which these portfolios contained risky and bad loans,' adds Professor Bulkley, whose research focuses on the performance of financial markets and the response of markets to profit warnings. He has a PhD in Economics from Berkeley.

He says: 'Buyers of these CDOs found it very difficult to assess their risks and relied on the judgement of ratings agencies, for example Moody's. So long as the housing boom continued everything seemed to be fine. But then the housing bubble burst. House prices fell and households were hit by high interest rates.

'The result was that many households could no longer afford to repay their mortgages. When they started to default it then became apparent that CDOs were much more risky than the credit rating agencies had previously judged. Panic spread among the banks.'

Many banks lost confidence in each other, not knowing how many risky, asset-backed securities they had on their books. As a consequence, banks stopped lending to each other. Banks around the world were hit by the impact of the sup-prime crisis as they effectively ran out of money.

Professor Bulkley says that despite the best efforts of the US Federal Bank and the EU Central Bank to pump money into the banking system, banks remain reluctant to start lending to each other again. This has led to a wider loss of confidence, not only in the financial sector but also in the wider economy. Even good borrowers are finding it hard to secure loans in the dash for cash.

'The lack of liquidity has had a wider impact and has brought with it bankruptcies, job losses and recession. This in turn has hit share prices. The US government has tried to address the problem by implementing a huge bail-out

package to effectively swap the bad debts held by the banks for a stake in them,' he says.

Similarly, the UK government has also pledged billions to the banks in exchange for shares in them. However, the outlook for the world economy looks bleak. Consumer confidence has plunged as people have become worried about the security of their jobs and the falling value of their properties. In the high street, sales have slipped as people become more cautious in their spending. Sales of consumer goods like cars and televisions have also been impacted and this has damaged manufacturing industries.

Professor Bulkley adds: 'The depression of the 1930s was brought to an end by the massive spending that went with WWII. This lesson, coupled with the determination of governments to stimulate spending, will hopefully ensure this recession will prove no more serious than the typical post war recession.'

The **psychology** behind the crisis

With the global economy in financial meltdown, unemployment rising and house prices falling, University News spoke to Professor Stephen Lea about the role that psychology has played in the credit crisis and resulting downturn.

'It is all about confidence,' says Professor Lea, Head of the School of Psychology. 'The objective circumstances do not have to change very much, but if people lose confidence in the market everything can go horribly wrong,' he adds.

In recent months, Professor Lea has fielded a number of phone calls from financial journalists looking for answers about why we have ended up in the current economic crisis. He is one of the few academics in the UK who specialise in Economic Psychology, the psychology of money, financial management, and choice.

'Journalists have started to understand that it is not just about the economic circumstances. It is also about the psychological and behavioural context as well', he says from his office in the Washington Singer building on the University's Streatham campus. He adds: 'It is an area of

psychology that has not really been fully explored, but it is gaining wider recognition.'

In 2002, the Nobel Prize for Economics was awarded to two American academics for their groundbreaking work bringing together psychological and experimental economics. Daniel Kahneman of Princeton University was recognised for his role in establishing the theory that human decision-making can often be at odds with standard economic theory. Vernon Smith shared the award for his role in experimental economics.

To illustrate how psychology can play a role in economics, Professor Lea points to the example of the bank run, a situation when savers withdraw their deposits en masse because they fear a bank is, or may become, insolvent and that they will therefore lose their money.

'From the beginning of commercial banking, bankers have found that they could loan out roughly eight times as much as they had in deposits. That is fine so long as nobody asks for all their money back in one go.'

But sometimes people do ask for their money back. The first major bank run in Britain since 1866 was sparked in 2007 when Northern Rock sought emergency funding from the Bank of England. Although savers were urged not to withdraw their savings, many did panic and took out their money anyway. One of the abiding images of the bank run were the long queues that formed outside branches of Northern Rock in high streets up and down the UK.

'If you get a collapse in confidence then everybody goes and asks for their money back. If that happens you get a run on the banks and they will run out of money,' says Professor Lea. 'It then becomes a self-fulfilling situation.'

'It is very difficult to avoid a 'boom and bust'. The market is not very good at producing stability. When the economy is doing well there is increased confidence, so individuals are more likely to buy things and spend money. This helps the economy to grow and the bubble gets bigger.' Professor Lea explains that the human behaviours that lead to such economic booms are fairly easy to create in laboratory conditions. He adds: 'When confidence goes, people will often batten down the hatches and put off buying a new house or the latest model of car.'

Research news



▲ Star Trails Over Gemini North/Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy.

Space: the final frontier

Astrophysicist Dr Jennifer Patience is part of an international team of researchers behind a major space discovery. The team, from Canada, the US and UK, has become the first to capture images of a multi-planet system around a normal star, much like our own solar system. The team used the giant Gemini-N (pictured above) and Keck telescope on Mauna Kea, Hawaii, to capture the infrared images.

Cancer link discovered

A research team from the Peninsula Medical School and the Universities of Exeter, Plymouth and Iowa, has found evidence linking the chemical Bisphenol A (BPA) to diabetes and heart disease in adults. BPA, a controversial chemical commonly used in food and drink containers, has previously caused concerns over health risks to babies, as it is present in some baby bottles.

Murder mystery solved?

Professor Chris Turney is the lead author of a paper that suggests our ancestors played a role in the extinction of Australia's prehistoric animals. Scientists had thought that climate change towards the end of the last ice age resulted in worldwide mass extinctions. But new evidence reveals that the culprit is more likely to have been over-hunting by hungry early humans.

Women still paid less than men

Female executives earn smaller performance-related bonuses than their male counterparts, according to research by the University's School of Psychology and Centre for Leadership Studies. The research revealed that the median remuneration for women in the study was 19 per cent less than that for men.

Walking helps combat choc cravings

Professor Adrian Taylor, of the School of Sport and Health Sciences, is lead author on a paper that shows walking just fifteen minutes can help reduce chocolate cravings. The benefits of exercise in helping people avoid nicotine and other drugs has previously been acknowledged. But this is the first evidence that the same impact may be true for food cravings.

Dolphin deaths rise

Research by the School of Biosciences and Cornwall Wildlife Trust shows a worrying increase in the number of dead dolphins, whales and porpoises found on Cornish beaches. The frequency of deaths by these mammals, known as cetaceans, has risen significantly over the last eight years. It is believed that the rise could, in part, be due to more intensive fishing.

Research at the University of Exeter focuses on some of the most fundamental issues facing humankind today, from climate change to conflict in the Middle East: For more on these research stories and others, see www.exeter.ac.uk/research

Will Young

Alumnus Will Young (Politics 2001) speaks about his life, music and charity work since he graduated from the University of Exeter.

Using his fame to do some good is important to Exeter graduate Will Young. As a student, he helped organise the Safer Sex Ball to raise money for Positive Action South West, which provides support for people living with HIV/AIDS and their carers, as well as raising awareness of the issue.

Just nine days after winning Pop Idol he offered to become a patron of the charity. In 2003, Will performed his first solo concert for the charity that raised £22,500. And in December 2008, he returned to Exeter to perform at the city's Cathedral in a special concert for Positive Action South West. 'I think people forget about HIV/AIDS,' he says. 'It's not as high profile an issue as it once was, but it is still a huge issue.'

As well as supporting Positive Action South West, he supports Women's Aid, a charity working to end domestic violence against women and children, and Hideout, which helps vulnerable children and young people.

The 29-year-old is also currently an ambassador for the Mood Foundation, a charity set up by his brother, Rupert Young. The aim of the Foundation is to build a database of private therapists and alternative therapies used to treat depressive conditions. Working alongside GPs, the charity intends to assess what treatment is best for an individual and match him or her with the correct therapist or type of therapy, providing financial support where necessary.

'It is wonderful,' says Will, when asked what he thinks about the University of Exeter's Mood Disorders Centre, which recently won a multi-million pound grant to invest in a new research facility. Will cares passionately about raising awareness of the debilitating impact of mental health issues on many people's lives. 'It is something that is very much misunderstood,' he says. 'It is really important and it affects so many people. I think that universities and places where research is carried out should definitely be looking at it.'



Despite the fame he enjoys, there is much more to Will Young than simply being a pop idol. More than six years have passed since he hit the headlines as the original winner of the Pop Idol television talent show. Will famously clashed with judge Simon Cowell during the contest when the mogul described one of his performances as 'distinctly average'.

The would-be pop star simply replied, rather politely: 'You have projected insults throughout this show and it's been terrible to watch you. You are entitled to your opinion – but I think I did very well.' He went on to win the nation's heart and famously beat Gareth Gates to win the contest.

An awful lot has happened since then. He has firmly established himself in the music industry with a string of hits. Along the way he has picked up numerous accolades, including a 2005 Brit Award for the song *Your Game*. He recently returned to the charts with his fourth album, *Let It Go*. Will explains that singing remains a passion for him and that he loves to write and compose music. 'I always wanted to sing,' he says. 'I love it and I love what I am doing at the moment. I am doing interviews, meeting interesting people and singing.'

As well as singing, Will has won plaudits for his acting abilities. In 2005, he made his film debut alongside Judi Dench and Bob Hoskins in *Mrs Henderson Presents*. He also starred on stage in 2007 in a critically acclaimed production of Noel Coward's *The Vortex* at the Royal Exchange Theatre. 'I learnt so much about what it takes to act on stage,' he says. 'It was a real learning experience.'

'I had a great time,' he says, when asked about his experience of life as a student at Exeter. 'I really enjoyed it there. I made some great friends. I have nothing but fond memories.' Will is modest about his own learning experience as a student. 'I don't think I was a model student,' he admits, 'although University was where I really started doing my singing'.

'I did a debate at the Oxford Union recently and it was good to get back to studying and having to think about things academically. I miss that sometimes.' Above all, it was at Exeter that Will pursued his desire to help others.

So what does the future hold for Will? He adds: 'It is simply about doing the right thing at the right time at the moment.'

Mood Disorders Centre

It is estimated that one in four of us will experience a mental health problem at some point in our lives. Exeter's Mood Disorders Centre is leading research into improving psychological interventions for conditions such as bipolar disorder and depression. The Wellcome Trust recently awarded the centre £3.6 million to create a new research facility that will allow 400 people each year to participate in psychological therapy. 'This support will directly enhance our ability to improve psychological treatments for mood disorders, which are highly prevalent and cause considerable distress, disability and economic burden,' says Professor Ed Watkins, of the Mood Disorders Centre.

The audacity of hope

University News spoke to Professor Jeffrey Karp, a specialist in public opinion, elections, and political behaviour at Exeter's Department of Politics, about the wider lessons that can be drawn from Barack Obama's rise to power.

Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States of America, swept to the White House on a wave of popularity. Against Republican candidate John McCain, Obama looked young, intelligent, and at the same time, more presidential. Amid a two-year campaign, Obama has inspired a whole new generation, not only in the US but also in the wider world, to become engaged with politics. Perhaps not since John F. Kennedy, has a young, liberal politician carried so much expectation on his shoulders.

The Obama political story is remarkable and, in many ways, like the best selling book that outlines his political credo, audacious. There are many milestones in the Obama curriculum vitae that appear to have shaped the man and the politician. From community organiser in Chicago to law professor and then senator, Obama's rise now appears almost inevitable, his win historic.

'From a historical perspective, Obama's win was very impressive,' reflects Professor Karp, a fortnight after Obama's victory. He scrolls down an electoral map of the US on the politics section of the *New York Times* website. The map is coloured blue and red, blue denoting states that voted Democrat and red Republican.

'He took 53 per cent of the popular vote compared with McCain's 46 per cent share,' he adds, pointing to Virginia and North Carolina, which are blue. 'These are two states that have not been carried by a Democrat since 1964 and 1976 respectively. Of course, the really important battle that Obama faced was to win his own party's nomination,' says Professor Karp.







'In retrospect, his win seems almost inevitable but that simply wasn't the case at the start of his campaign. He was a junior senator. Hillary was the national figure and was the early favourite to win the nomination for the Democrats. She was well funded and well connected. It really was hers to lose.'

'I think her campaign managers thought that they were going to win early and win big. That simply did not happen and Obama stayed in the race for longer than they had anticipated. They hadn't planned for that and after Super Tuesday, they found themselves still fighting Obama and with their campaign funds running out.'

'Had she been prepared for a long campaign then she may have defeated Obama in the primaries. If that had happened, we would probably be talking now about the Hillary Clinton presidency.'

How did Obama manage to beat Clinton and then go on to win the race for the keys to the White House? Professor Karp attributes Obama's success not only to his charisma and to his natural ability as a great orator, but also his ability to build an effective campaign machine that raised a record amount in donations.

Professor Karp picks up and switches on his iPhone. Soon he has found the Obama iPhone application that he downloaded from the Apple Store. 'The Obama campaign has been praised for its use of innovative campaigning tools like Facebook to generate support and volunteers,' he says 'I think the praise is justified. For example, this application provides you with information about the campaign at a local and national level. Videos and photos from the campaign are also readily accessible. It encourages people to get in touch with other friends by organising contacts by key battleground states and to donate directly to the campaign from the iPhone. It is a very sophisticated communication device.'

'He was extremely successful in raising small donations which allowed him to bypass public financing so by the end of the campaign he was able to massively outspend

McCain who was limited to \$84 million allotted to him by the Treasury,' he says.

Yet, despite all of the Obama campaign's use of new technology, for Professor Karp the election battle between Obama and McCain ultimately came down to one issue above all others, even health, climate change and Iraq; the state of the US economy.

'For me though, the big factor that led to the Obama win was the terrible state of the economy. Obama positioned himself as the change candidate. McCain seemed out of touch – more of the same, with no solutions. This is nothing new of course,' he continues. 'The phrase "It's the economy, stupid" was coined by Bill Clinton's successful 1992 presidential campaign against George H. W. Bush.'

'The lesson for incumbent politicians and governments is that if your economy isn't doing very well you don't want to have to go to the polls,' he says, highlighting the recent elections in New Zealand to illustrate his point, 'as you will probably lose.'

In New Zealand's recent general election, there was a change in the other direction. The electorate voted out the Labour-led government coalition and voted in the centre-right National Party. Like many other countries, the New Zealand economy is going into recession and the voters went for change.

The new centre-right Prime Minister John Key is relatively young – the same age as Barack Obama, 47. Above all, Professor Karp notes that they were both perceived by voters, hit hard by job losses and home repossessions, as offering change on the economy.

Could David Cameron be the British Obama? 'That depends,' adds Professor Karp, taking a moment's pause, before adding: 'If I were Gordon Brown I would do everything possible to see that the economy recovers before calling a general election. That is the true lesson from the US election.'



I love my playpen

▲ Professor Bruce Bradley is seen in the 'playpen' where experimental archaeologists are recreating the past.

World-famous flintknapper Professor Bruce Bradley loves being in his playpen. But this is no ordinary room. It is a special room where serious archaeological research is being undertaken.

The playpen is a place in the University's Laver Building where objects that were used thousands of years ago are being brought back to life. Stone tools like the ones once handled by Neanderthals are piled in one corner of the room. In another corner a giant wooden throwing spear, big enough to take out a rather large woolly mammoth, is mounted on the wall.

It is where you will probably discover Professor Bradley. The academic is one of the world's leading experts in primitive technology. He is also highly skilled in the craft of making tools and weapons from flint, known as flintknapping. Professor Bradley is the director of the University of Exeter's masters degree course in Experimental Archaeology. Exeter is one of only a few universities in the world to offer such a degree. Experimental Archaeology focuses on trying to understand the past by reconstructing how our ancestors lived and replicating the objects they used.

'By recreating the tools that Neanderthals and early humans used thousands of years ago, we are able to see how they were made,' says Bruce, as he picks up a flint cutting tool of the kind used by Neanderthals. 'It is only by doing this that we are able to test our theories about ancient technologies,' he adds.

The value of this research was recently revealed. Mystery still surrounds the reasons why Neanderthals became extinct around 28,000 years ago. Early modern humans, Homo sapiens, spread out of Africa into Eurasia around 40 – 50,000 years ago. This means there was an overlap of around 10,000 years between Neanderthals and our own ancestors. It has long been thought that Neanderthals died out because they were less intelligent.

But new research is helping debunk this 'stupid Neanderthal' theory. One of Bruce's MA students, Metin Eren, is the lead author of a paper in a leading scientific journal, which demonstrates that the stone tools used by early modern humans were no more efficient than those developed by Neanderthals.

A team from Exeter, Texas State University, Southern Methodist University, and the Think Computer Corporation spent three years recreating stone tools, or flakes, used by Neanderthals and early humans. They also replicated stone 'blades', a narrower tool, which were later used by Homo sapiens.

It had long been assumed, without actually being tested, that the blades used by early modern humans were a significant technological advance, helping Homo sapiens to out-compete their Neanderthal cousins. The researchers found that the blade technology is no more effective and is actually less efficient. Thus, it appears that Neanderthals were not really stupid or less sophisticated at all; they were just different. When the results of the research were published last year, they attracted global media coverage.

'Here is a clear example of where we have been able to recreate an ancient technology and put a long-held theory to the test,' adds Bruce, who is currently involved in a number of research projects including the early peopling of the New World. 'It really does show the value of the work we are doing. It is very exciting.'

Discovering the

Searching for a stray goat, a young Bedouin shepherd stumbled upon a cave in the Judean Desert in 1947. After entering the cave, the shepherd discovered a number of jars filled with scrolls. This was a remarkable chance discovery.

Over the next decade, many more ancient scrolls would be discovered in caves near the ruins of Qumran, 13 miles east of Jerusalem. These scrolls would come to be known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which are believed to have been hidden in the caves in around 66 BC at the outbreak of the Jewish-Roman War.

Unlocking the meaning of these ancient texts and others has fallen to academics who have mastered Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. One of them is Dr Siam Bhayro, an expert in Early Jewish Studies.

The academic recently arrived at Exeter's Department of Theology from the University of Cambridge. His post at Exeter has been funded thanks to a generous legacy left by former Professor Canon Roy Porter, known as Roy, a long standing theologian at the University. Professor Porter was Head of the Department of Theology between 1962 and 1986. Under his guidance, the department grew to prominence as one of the best places in the country to study theology. He was also responsible for writing many influential theological works.

As well as being a widely respected academic and prolific writer, Professor Porter was also regarded as a great teacher, his wit often

catching out unsuspecting students. He was also a great administrator. After he retired from the day-to-day business of academia, Professor Porter continued to write. During retirement, he published a number of works, including *The Illustrated Guide to the Bible*.

One of Professor Porter's passions was the teaching of Hebrew and the Old Testament. He believed strongly that the department should continue to provide an increasingly rare opportunity to master Biblical languages. To help achieve this, Professor Porter, who died on December 31, 2006, aged 85, left a £550,000 legacy to the University to support his vision. Part of his legacy was recently used to bring scholar Dr Siam Bhayro to the department.

'It is very difficult to overstate the importance of the Roy Porter bequest, not only to the Department of Theology but also to the field of Biblical Studies in general at this time in the United Kingdom,' says Dr Bhayro, sitting in his office surrounded by books on Hebrew and Jewish history.

'While other departments around the country are having to defend their positions against the threat of being closed or transferred to other disciplines, the Department of Theology at Exeter has been able to expand in a number of key areas, including my own,' he adds.

An avid Arsenal Football Club supporter, Dr Bhayro's office on the third floor of the Amory building is packed with shelves of books and other texts, as well as an Arsenal calendar.

past

'I have been hired to strengthen the Hebrew Bible programme and also to offer further expertise in Second Temple and Early Jewish Studies,' says Dr Bhayro as he clutches a copy of a section from the Dead Sea Scrolls in his hands. 'Such investment is a crucial aspect of Exeter's strategy to establish itself within the top 10 universities in the UK.'

Dr Bhayro, who has worked at universities around the world including Yale and University College London, adds: 'On a personal level, I am particularly pleased to have benefited from this bequest.'

He is also keen to praise Professor Porter for his role in the study of Arabic at the University and points out the close links between the teaching and study of Hebrew and Arabic.

'Given my work on Christian and Judaeo-Arabic in the medieval period, it seems fitting that I have been appointed, and I very much look forward to furthering the co-operation of our department with the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies in projects of mutual interest.'

If you are interested in leaving a legacy and would like more details, please contact Suzie Bannerman on +44(0)1392 269011 or email s.n.bannerman@exeter.ac.uk.

Dr Siam Bhayro has been able to join Exeter's Department of Theology thanks to the Roy Porter legacy. >



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Future thought leaders

‘The scholarship has made a huge difference to me,’ says Hannah Green, a first-year undergraduate in Biological Sciences. ‘It has allowed me to buy books that are vital for my course and it has helped me to concentrate on my work and not have to worry about my finances.’

Hannah is just one of a number of bright scientific minds who are receiving financial support at the University of Exeter during their studies. High achieving students like Hannah are eligible to apply for Jubilee and Millhayes Science Scholarships. The aim of the scholarships is to encourage the most talented students to study science, engineering and mathematics at Exeter.

Under the scheme, Jubilee Science Scholarships provide £2,000 per year to students. Outstanding Jubilee scholars, those who have obtained three A grades at A-Level, are also eligible to apply for an additional Millhayes Scholarship of £1,000 each year. Having achieved four A grades at A-Level, Hannah is currently a recipient of the full Jubilee-Millhayes Scholarship. She is taking full advantage of the financial security that the scholarship is giving her. As well as pursuing her studies, Hannah is currently volunteering in the community with the elderly. ‘It is fantastic to be able to spend time volunteering and not have to worry about the financial pressures of doing so,’ she adds.

Another Millhayes scholar, alumna Tamsyn Uren-Webster, 21, who graduated with a First in Biological Sciences in 2008, also highlights the positive impact of the scholarships on the lives of students. ‘The scholarship has been invaluable,’ she says. ‘I was able to use the scholarship to buy a new laptop, which was really helpful when it came to my studies.’ Tamsyn now plans to complete a PhD.

Matthew Perkins, a second year student in Human Biosciences, says his decision to come to Exeter was heavily influenced by the scholarships that were available. ‘It was the deciding factor in my decision to come here,’ he says. ‘I think it is very generous for someone to support scholarships in this way. It really does encourage people to come to the University.’

Staff and students gathered recently for a ceremony to name a laboratory in honour of the anonymous benefactor responsible for the Millhayes Science Scholarships. The Millhayes Teaching Laboratory, in the Geoffrey Pope building, recognises the generosity of the donor. His support has sponsored postgraduate research in Medical History, Rural Geography, Psychology and Postgraduate Medicine.

Professor Nicholas Talbot, head of the School of Biosciences, comments: ‘We are extraordinarily grateful to the Millhayes donor for his longstanding support of students in their studies at Exeter. Millhayes scholars make a great contribution to the life of the University and many have gone on to very successful careers.’

Biosciences evolves

Work has started on a £18 million investment in world class Biosciences facilities. The Geoffrey Pope Building will undergo a large-scale refurbishment and a new state-of-the-art aquarium will be built in the basement. New cell biology, molecular genetics and ecotoxicology laboratories will be created. The investment is in line with the University’s science strategy, a plan to invest £80 million in science at Exeter over the next three years.

Making a difference

‘It is really nice hearing about stories from couples who met as students at Exeter and who are now married,’

says third-year undergraduate Raleigh Addington.

Raleigh was speaking just before he started work one evening at the Annual Fund’s telethon headquarters at the University’s St Luke’s campus. Talking over the phone is something that comes naturally to the Economics and Politics student. The 21-year-old has spoken to hundreds of alumni around the world in the three years that he has worked on the University’s Annual Fund telethon campaign.

‘I started as a caller when I was a first year,’ says Raleigh, who last year worked as the telethon assistant, supervising other student callers. ‘I have always enjoyed it. I really like talking to alumni and finding out about what they have gone on to do since leaving University.’ Over the last year alone, students working for the Annual Fund telephoned over 20,000 alumni to talk to them about their Exeter memories and to ask for a donation to support the University’s student community.

Since the Annual Fund telethon was established in 2002, it has raised over £1 million in donations from alumni and supporters of the University. Despite current world financial problems, support for the telethon remains strong. ‘You can see the impact of gifts all over the campuses,’ adds Raleigh, keen to point out the positive impact of gifts to the Annual Fund on the lives of ordinary students.

This year, more than £150,000 raised from the Annual Fund in 2007/08 is set to be distributed to various projects across the University. A panel of alumni, students and University staff helped in the selection of projects to receive funding for the money raised by the Annual Fund.

Among the projects that will benefit is a scheme called *Excited about Science* at the

School of Biosciences. *Excited about Science* is a project to bring year 11 students from local schools, who have no family history of higher education but show an aptitude for science, into the School of Biosciences for a series of workshops. As well as helping to encourage youngsters to be interested in science, the scheme provides key employability skills and work experience for undergraduates interested in teaching and careers in science communication.

Meanwhile, funding is also being allocated to *Action After Stroke*, a stroke rehabilitation group that runs twice a week at the St Luke’s campus. Each session includes one-to-one exercise rehabilitation and is followed by a social gathering. *Action After Stroke* was set up in 2000 and is now a registered charity. It is run by volunteers, including undergraduate students, postgraduates and staff. The money will pay for 20 students to train with the British Association of Cardiac Rehabilitation (BACR) and will also be used to buy new rehabilitation equipment to help people recover from their illness.

Dr Gary O’Donovan, Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Medicine, says: ‘*Action After Stroke* provides a life-changing experience for participants and volunteers. There are approximately 20 student volunteers at any one time and an alumni network of over 50 students. The students blossom alongside the stroke victims and many are inspired to write dissertations about their experiences.’

For a full list of the projects supported or to make your own gift to the Annual Fund, please visit the website at www.exeter.ac.uk/giving

'You can see the
impact of gifts all
over the campuses'





Triathlon: the race of a lifetime

'It was one of the hardest things I have ever done in my life,' recalls alumna and triathlete Amanda Dean (Exercise and Sports Science 2008) about her experience of competing in the Ironman UK Triathlon for the first time in 2008. 'But it was also one of the best things I have done,' she adds.

The multi-discipline endurance sport of triathlon is a continuous race over various distances in the disciplines of swimming, cycling and running. Triathlons are made up of a swim, cycle ride, and then a run in which competitors race against the clock. And the Ironman is one of the toughest triathlons in the world.

The Ironman UK Triathlon is held once a year in Sherborne, Dorset. The gruelling event attracts competitors from around the world. The race itself is composed of a 2.4 mile open water swim, a 112 mile bike ride and then a 26.2 mile run. Due to the distances involved, competitors have to calculate how to preserve their energy and stamina for each stage of the race.

'It was my biggest physical challenge to date and was an important learning experience for me. After training so hard to get there it meant a lot when I crossed the finish line,' says Amanda, who was recently named by Convocation, the University of Exeter's alumni association, as its 2008/09 sports scholar. Not only is she pursuing her passion for triathlon, she is also currently studying for an MSc degree in Sport and Health Science at Exeter.

The postgraduate and sports scholar previously worked as a Community Dental Nurse with people with special needs at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital. However, filled with a desire to enter higher education, Amanda took the important step of deciding to study with the Open University with the ultimate goal of completing a degree. It was a lot of hard work because Amanda was also working full-time.

After studying for a number of years with the Open University, she was accepted directly into the second year to complete an undergraduate degree on the Exercise and Sports Science course at Exeter. Amanda decided to leave her full-time job and financial security to pursue her dream of obtaining a degree. 'It was a big decision,' she says. 'But I just knew that I had to do it. I couldn't pass that opportunity by.'

A willingness not to be afraid to have a go at new things is one of Amanda's characteristics. When she first embarked on her training to participate in triathlon events, one of the hurdles she had to overcome was her lack of cycling skills. 'The last time I had been on a bike was when I was little; the bike was pink with a basket on the front,' she says. 'I wasn't put off though and although I had quite a few falls, I managed to get the hang of it eventually.'

Given the demanding nature of the sport of triathlon, Amanda puts in many hours of training each week to ensure that she has the strength and stamina that is required. 'The training is hard work, but you have to put in the effort if you want to do well.'

One of the biggest challenges she has faced is juggling the cost of pursuing the sport with her postgraduate studies. That is why she was delighted to be selected as a sports scholar. 'It is fantastic,' she says. 'The scholarship is going to allow me to invest in new equipment and to assist in covering the cost of entry fees for the races that I was hoping to participate in. I was very pleased to be chosen by Convocation. I have already enjoyed meeting several members and telling them about what I do. I have also received a substantial amount of kit supplied by Hilly Running Clothing. Their generosity and support in this way has enabled me to train and race with top quality clothing.'

As well as planning to succeed in her sporting ambitions, Amanda wants to continue her academic studies at the highest level and go on to use her qualifications to work in the public health sector. 'I am really hoping to be able to continue my studies and do my PhD,' she says. 'That is my dream.'

Gulf Alumni Dinner

Date: 2 April

Venue: Dr Sultan Al Qasimi Centre of Gulf Studies, Sharjah, UAE

An annual event hosted by His Highness Dr Sheikh Sultan bin Mohamed Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Sharjah.

Convocation Spring Reunion

Date: 17 – 21 April

Venue: Hope Hall, University of Exeter

54th Annual General Meeting of Convocation

The 54th AGM of Convocation will be held on Saturday 18 April 2009 at 10am in Hope Hall during the Annual Reunion of Convocation. The three-year terms of office of four members of Standing Committee will have expired at that time. There are also two one-year vacancies.

Nomination papers are obtainable from: The Secretary to Convocation Standing Committee, c/o Alumni Office, University of Exeter, Northcote House, Exeter EX4 4QJ.

Nominations should be returned by 27 March 2009. All present members are eligible for renomination. Any members wishing to bring forward a motion for consideration by the AGM should send the Secretary to Convocation Standing Committee notice of such a motion, signed by the proposer and at least two other members of Convocation, to reach him by 27 March 2009 at the latest.

Gala Dinner

Date: 20 May

Venue: The Inner Temple, London

Sir Clive Woodward, OBE (Hon LLD 2007), Director of Elite Performance for the British Olympic Association, who led England to victory as Head Coach in the 2003 Rugby World Cup, is the guest speaker at this year's Gala Dinner. The dinner is being held at The Inner Temple, in the heart of London's legal quarter.

To book your place at the dinner, please contact Events Officer Angela Evans on +44 (0)1392 263148 or angela.evans@exeter.ac.uk

Convocation Summer Outing

Date: 13 June

Venue: Longleat

Convocation's annual summer outing will feature the traditional picnic, followed by visits to Longleat house, safari park and other attractions and dinner at a local restaurant. For more information, visit www.exeterconvocation.org/annual-outing/ or contact Rolf Holstein at rholstein@btinternet.com

Alumni Golf Day

Date: 11 September

Venue: Worplesdon Golf Club, Surrey

This year's annual alumni golf day follows the success of previous events, which have raised funds towards golf scholarships. To reserve your place or for more information, please contact Rod Alexander rodericscottuk@yahoo.co.uk or John Gilbert John_Gilbert@blueyonder.co.uk

Alumni Reunion

Class of 1954, 1959, 1964, 1969, 1974, 1979, and 1984 (all years are welcome to attend)

Date: 18 – 20 September

Venue: Holland Hall, University of Exeter

Highlights of this year's reunion includes talks by University staff, a campus tour, Gala Dinner evening and special class events. To book a place and for further information, contact the Alumni Relations team on +44 (0)1392 263141 or email a.petrons@exeter.ac.uk

Media Network at Chelsea FC

The world-famous home of Chelsea FC recently hosted a media networking event for alumni. Alumnus Simon Greenberg (History 1990), Communications and Public Affairs Director at Chelsea FC, hosted the event in November. The evening featured a behind-the-scenes tour of Stamford Bridge.



Free alumni benefits

Being a member of the alumni community comes with a wide range of free benefits.

Here are just a few:

- Discounts on a number of postgraduate courses.
- Access to an international alumni network.
- Social and professional networking opportunities around the world.

Check out our website at www.exeter.ac.uk/alumni for more.

Would you like to organise your own event for alumni?

If so, please let us know. We can provide support to publicise your event.

Please contact alumni@exeter.ac.uk

BE A FAN OF EXETER ON FACEBOOK

Show your love for Exeter by signing up as a fan of the University of Exeter on the social networking site Facebook. It only takes a few seconds to join the group, which already has more than 2,300 fans.

For details about University events see: www.exeter.ac.uk/news/whatson.shtml

For information about events for alumni see: www.exeter.ac.uk/alumni