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Welcome to the bridge – the magazine from the University of Dundee

Dundee is one of the UK’s leading universities, with an international reputation for excellence across research and teaching. the bridge is here to show you the impact Dundee is having locally, nationally and around the world.

This is a glimpse into the work being done by our scientists, artists, doctors, engineers, writers - all pushing at the boundaries and crossing bridges into new areas of discovery. the bridge is about highlighting those areas, stimulating debate and engaging minds. We hope you enjoy it.

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Our cover features a specially commissioned work - Mills Observatory - by artist Francis Boag. Francis is a Dundee alumnus, and you can read more about him and his work on page 52. www.francisboag.com
The University of Dundee – at the heart of the community

From super science to supermodels, 2008-09 has been another landmark year for the University of Dundee. Visitor numbers to the campus have increased at a rate matched only by a record performance in terms of research income, while students now enjoy access to all the facilities afforded by a £200m redevelopment of everything from the library and teaching facilities to a state-of-the-art sports centre. Continued excellence in teaching and research drives the University’s strategy of providing the best for all on campus and in the wider community.

Engaging events

20,000 people have visited the University campus through a rich programme of public engagement events over the past year. Free public lectures at the University, including the 85th season of Saturday Evening Lectures, regularly attracted audiences of more than 700 people from all across Scotland with ages ranging from 8 to 80, and there were more than 7,000 e-ticket downloads. The 2008 University/City Council Dundee Christmas Lecture featured Professor Carlos Frenk, a physicist from the University of Durham, demonstrating quantum physics, through 3D glasses, to nearly 800 people!

The Dundee Literary Festival attracted more than 2,500 people over a four day period with the likes of David Peace, Hardeep Singh-Kohli, and Gerald Scarfe all appearing. The 2009 Monikie Race for Diabetes saw over 300 runners completing the 10k course, while the University’s inaugural Picturing Dundee photo competition attracted hundreds of entries at an extremely high standard.
A healthy society
The University has continued to grow the base of medical and life sciences expertise which has gained Dundee an international reputation. The new £10m Scottish Institute for Cell Signalling was launched under the guidance of Sir Philip Cohen, and we opened landmark new facilities with the core laboratory of the Translational Medicine Research Collaboration and the Tayside Clinical Research Centre.

Researchers at the University generated worldwide interest with papers on subjects as varied as obesity genes, the causes of eczema, the effects of fungi on clearing up depleted uranium, and the benefits of having baby buggies facing towards parents.

Working across the community
The University is engaged with groups of all ages across the community, from Literary Dundee’s reading workshops for children, through attracting hundreds of schools pupils from all over Scotland on to the campus for major competitions in science and engineering, to our pioneering computing user groups for the ‘silver surfer’ generation of over-55s.

A rich culture
The University has driven forward the V&A at Dundee project to create a statement building on Dundee’s newly developing waterfront which will house contemporary collections from the V&A and Scottish applied artists and host ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions, generating considerable excitement across Scotland. And supermodel Erin O’Connor (above, with Jewellery & Metalwork graduate Kate Tweddle), a trustee of the Victoria & Albert Museum, opened the 2009 Dundee Degree Show which proved a massive hit – over 7000 people visited in the first 24 hours to see the work of this year’s graduating art & design students.
Professor Pete Downes took up the position of University Principal and Vice-Chancellor in July 2009. Here he talks about the challenges of the job, the future outlook for the University, and its unique place in the community.

Professor Pete Downes is fresh from meeting a delegation of representatives from one of China’s largest universities, the visit coming hard on the heels of a day spent helping publicise Dundee’s efforts to form a significant partnership with the Victoria & Albert Museum.

These are the kind of activities which are commonplace now that he sits in the office of the fourth floor of the University tower block with a spectacular view of the Tay estuary, the office that has ‘Principal’ marked on the door.
he Top
The University is vital to the cultural life and regeneration of the city. The University contributes to the life and health of the city, and the city does the same for the University. It has been a very good relationship and I am sure it can continue to be.

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“The V&A at Dundee project is an example of that, and I would put it in the same bracket as the biotech industries which have grown up around our world class reputation in biomedical sciences. The V&A is perhaps the headline project of the moment, and we are contributing significantly to helping make it happen, but it won’t be the only thing. It is just one piece of what the University can do.”

Professor Downes obviously has an in-depth knowledge of the College of Life Sciences, having been involved at the heart of it since coming to Dundee as Professor of Biochemistry in 1989. But he recognises the spread and the depth of excellence across the entire University campus.

“I am acutely aware, through the visits I have made directly to the schools and colleges of the University, that there are high quality activities in all parts of the institution,” he said. “We will do everything we can to nurture that excellence. The first thing I want to ensure is that our areas of strength continue to develop. We cannot imagine that standing still will be sufficient in any area. But they must do so in a sustainable way. We should not continue to support activities that aren’t academically or financially sustainable.

“There are nascent and rapidly improving areas, for instance nursing and geography respectively, which look very promising. The key to making the very best of them is going to be in developing a research strategy of focussed excellence with an emphasis on external recognition and sustainable sources of funding.”

There is no doubt that Professor Downes has taken the helm at a time when economic conditions mean some uncharted waters lie ahead for not just higher education but the public sector as a whole. Financial settlements from Government are likely to be as tight as they have been in a long time. This comes not long after the University carried out its own Sustainability Review, which led to the institution cutting its cloth accordingly through a Voluntary Severance Scheme and other measures.

That exercise has helped increase the financial health of the University, but with the external conditions uncertain to say the least there will be no complacency in ensuring a sustainable future.

“We need to be in control of our own future, and sustainability has to be at the heart of that,” Professor Downes emphasised. “We cannot stifle growth and development but at the same time there may have to be some difficult decisions that have to be made. I am not going to shy away from that.

“I am interested in growth, development, quality and excellence. It is all about how we achieve that in what may often be difficult circumstances. There are external circumstances which will affect us, as they will every other institution, but that shouldn’t stop us continuing to strive to do things better. We have got to be one of the organisations which come out of this period stronger. And if we are to do that it is going to require some brave decisions.

Whatever the degree of comfort, it is an aspect of the role he identifies as absolutely key, maintaining strong relationships with the University’s external partners. Key among them is the city of Dundee and the local community.

“A distinctive feature of this University, and one of the things I find most attractive about it, is the place it occupies within the community and the relationships we have with Dundee and the wider region,” said Professor Downes.
I am interested in growth, development, quality and excellence. It is all about how we achieve that in what may often be difficult circumstances... All I want is for people to put 100 per cent effort into the job they do for this University. That will get us a long way towards our goal.

“All I want is for people to put 100 per cent effort into the job they do for this University. That will get us a long way towards our goal.”

Professor Downes appointment as Principal and Vice-Chancellor follows a steady progression over the past 20 years at Dundee, where he has played a major role in seeing the College of Life Sciences rise to a position of international eminence.

“I went from being Professor of Biochemistry to leading the Department of Biochemistry, to leading the School of Life Sciences and becoming the inaugural Dean of the Faculty of Life Sciences, to heading the College of Life Sciences and being a Vice-Principal of the University. Most people would have had to move institution each time they made those progressions, so I have been extremely fortunate to be able to do all of it here in Dundee.

“My career has grown very much in tandem with the development of the University. I have to say that is not entirely an accident, because through all of those roles I have been involved in some elements of that restructuring and growth of the institution.”

Throughout that time he has been involved in cutting-edge research, combining his administrative and leadership roles with that of being a prominent biochemist. However, with this move he will largely relinquish direct involvement with research.

“As far as I am concerned the Principal’s job is very much a full-time one and needs my full attention. So the vast majority of my research work will be taken on by others in my group. We had been moving towards that for some time so there is a natural succession in place there. I will still have some small involvement but very much scaled down.”

Moving away from being at the heart of that world of scientific research has not been without its moments of difficulty.

“It is not really a question of moving away from front-line scientific experiments. For most people it is when you are a PhD student or a post-doctoral researcher that you will really be at the bench carrying out experiments.

“As you progress to being a group leader you are not really lab-based as such, as your primary roles become more concerned with fundraising, guidance and development.

“The big change for me came when we built the Sir James Black Centre and I finally got an office that was right next to my lab! Previously I had been two floors away from the lab, so that was a very positive change. However, it made it a much bigger shock to move away from it when I was initially appointed as Acting Principal here. Instead of progressing away from my lab I had actually got a lot closer to it in recent times.

“That was one of the big changes in coming in to this job. I had to go to my lab and tell my research staff and for me it was the end of an era working with the lab. Frankly, I was very emotional and it was a struggle to get the words out. It was a very poignant moment for me. But I have always been a great believer in the idea that you pass things on when they are in good shape, and I feel that in terms of the lab I have handed on something which is at the top of its game and internationally recognised.”

While the demands of the job are intensive, Professor Downes has protected areas of private time and enjoyment, some of it in the interests of being able to carry out his new duties as effectively as possible.

“A large part of this job involves strategic thinking and decision making. The best thinking time for me is when I am out having a run. That sort of exercise is metronomic and can lead you to a place that is very good for clear thinking. I have a bad knee that I’ve inherited from my footballing days but I do get out for a run two or three times a week. I do other things as well, I play golf occasionally, I’ve got a rowing machine and a bike. I think that’s important. I’ve always worked intensively when required but you need some time away from that.”

The question of what he finds enjoyable away from work naturally leads to the concluding question of a pleasant hour-long chat – does he find the new job enjoyable?

“Is it enjoyable? To answer that I’d have to go back and look at my previous jobs. In terms of the day-to-day enjoyment, well, I didn’t enjoy writing out grant applications and I certainly didn’t enjoy responding to referee’s criticisms of my papers, but then I did enjoy seeing exciting results or reading a new paper that showed forward movement in the field.

“I think the answer is that the feeling of enjoyment and satisfaction comes from what has been achieved in the long-term. There are elements of getting there that are not intrinsically enjoyable but are worth it for the end result. In any one day there will be some enjoyable things and other not-so-enjoyable things. But over time as I progress and the University progresses and develops as a result of that, I am sure I will derive both enjoyment and satisfaction from what we have done.

“One of the things that drives me is that I am never really content to dwell on what has been achieved. To some extent I am never satisfied because I always want something more next. But you have to remember to stop occasionally and take time to look at what has been achieved and think, ‘Yes, we did well there.’”
Dundee not only attracts students from around the world but has a league of nations among its staff with over 70 nationalities represented at the University. The Bridge spoke to some of Dundee’s international stars about what brought them to the city and the impact being here has had on their work.

Inke Nähke

**Inke Nähke** is Professor of Epithelial Biology in Cell and Developmental Biology at the College of Life Sciences and a Cancer Research UK Senior Research Fellow.

“I came here from America, although I was born and grew up in Germany. I heard about Dundee Life Sciences first from Professor Colin Watts and Professor Birgit Lane. I had job offers in the States, but after considering them decided to come to Dundee.

“I have never regretted the decision to come here. Every time I return from a trip, I realise that working and living conditions here are very good. I thought this would be a good environment for my two small children to grow up. Plus, I felt that at Dundee Life Sciences there was a ‘can do’ attitude, and at the time I moved here, things had really started to grow. There was also a sense of adventure that helped the decision to move here.

“It was exciting to come somewhere entirely new. This place (the Wellcome Trust Building) had just been opened in May 1998 and I arrived in August. This is the most pleasant building I have ever worked in; the central atrium is a great meeting place.

“I used to get people saying ‘Dundee? Is that in Australia’? Things have changed! This place is just as pressurised as any other that seeks to be world class. The science I’ve been able to do here has been extremely exciting. Dundee is now very much on the map in terms of science.”

Inke had previously worked at Harvard Medical School, Stanford University and the University of California San Francisco.

“I value the connections I was able to make in my short time in Boston, and I’m now a Visiting Professor at Harvard Medical School for some of the summer. I lived in San Francisco for almost 20 years and because of local politics, the community was not always supportive of the institution. This is an attitude I have never encountered here in Dundee. I find that here there is a sense of community with a positive attitude towards the international background of those who have come to the city to work at the University. I like the people here, they are straightforward and down to earth and remind me a bit of the people where I grew up in Northern Germany.”

The chance for close collaboration with other researchers and clinicians in Dundee has also proved a boon says Inke.

“My work is on colon cancer, and it turns out that most colon cancers have in common changes one particular gene. We are trying to understand what the product of this gene normally does and how. We used to work mostly with molecules in test tubes, and cells in petri dishes. Now we create stunning three-dimensional images – so we can see the problem at the level of molecule, cell, and the whole tissue. I have a standing collaboration with medical doctors – I go up to Ninewells to attend clinics and operations. It helps me to see the disease in context of the whole person, not just the molecule.”
Dr Deepak Gopinath is a Lecturer in Town & Regional Planning within the College of Arts and Social Sciences.

“I first came here by train for my interview last June,” says Dr Deepak Gopinath, lecturer in Town & Regional Planning. “It was a good way to arrive in the city, crossing the Tay estuary with the hills behind – it really reminded me of my home state of Kerala. We always used to go down to the water at the end of the day and at the weekend there, and I think it’s something I was missing, without realising it.

“Since I finished all the corrections for my PhD in March we have started to explore more; my wife and I like to walk – not up mountains or anything! We’ve visited Tentsmuir, and driven up to Aberdeen.

“My wife likes it here. I am from the South of India and she is from the very north, in the Himalayas – it’s colder there than here so she’s quite happy with the climate!

“I did my PhD in Sheffield, which is a big university town and can get really busy. Dundee is a quiet place in comparison, it’s peaceful. When I go home in the evening I can see the river from my house, you see rabbits, and are surrounded by trees. But in terms of work, you have access to all the journals you need here, there’s good network speeds, there’s a direct train to London…”

A relatively compact department has made settling in easy, said Deepak. “This is a small department, so here you can walk into the Head of Department’s office and have a chat, it’s not hierarchical. It works both ways though – people pop into my office as well!

“When I look back to my work in town planning in Delhi, they have a strong grounding in architecture and engineering, but here the approach is much broader and includes disciplines within the social sciences, such as Geography. We are now looking forward to collaborating with India.”

Dr Xiaoyi Mu, Shawn to his friends, has been working as a Lecturer in Energy Economics at the Centre for Energy, Petroleum and Mineral Law and Policy (CEPMLP) for just over a year.

“I like Dundee, but the Centre was the main reason that I came here – it’s almost unique, there are maybe only three places around the world which have a place like this specialising in energy, with students and staff from all over the world.”

“The first time I heard about CEPMLP was when I was working in Beijing at the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC). Professor Paul Stevens from CEPMLP visited Beijing and I attended a presentation he did. Ever since then this is one of the places that I wanted to come.”

After seven years in industry in China, Shawn gained his PhD in Economics from the University of Oklahoma, followed by two years as a senior consultant at a leading energy consultancy in California before moving to Dundee – ironically as a replacement for Professor Stevens, who retired in 2008.

“Being here is great because it’s a platform for doing what is interesting to me as a researcher – I enjoy teaching but there is no point staying in academia unless you are interested in research – and unusually the Centre has links with industry, which isn’t typical of an academic institution. I’m interested in how the energy industry is organised, managed and regulated, and obviously the financial aspects of that.”

Shawn manages to return to China every year, to visit his family who live 600 miles south of Beijing. Having lived in such diverse locations internationally, how does Dundee compare?

“Dundee is a little different from California! I used to like the big city life, but having lived in Oklahoma, Sacramento, and now Dundee, I’m used to life in smaller cities – I couldn’t go back to the one and a half hour commute to work! The people here are nice, it’s very international and they are very friendly.”
Susann Schweiger and John Foerster

Susann Schweiger is Professor of Molecular Medicine and Head of Centre for Oncology & Molecular Medicine in the College of Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing. Susann’s husband Dr John Foerster is a Senior Clinical Lecturer in Dermatology, also within the Centre for Oncology and Molecular Medicine.

“We all arrived in August 2007, moving together. John had first come in January, because he was invited to give a talk, and then we both came back in March for a more official visit and seminar. We stayed for four days, and Irwin McLean (Head of Molecular Medicine in the College of Life Sciences) and Irene Leigh (Head of College of Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing) showed us round.

“They have a well organised programme of what they show to potential staff members. They took us up Dundee Law, to Saint Andrews, Perth, Broughty Ferry… They took us to the beach and to Vissochi’s – they knew exactly what they were doing! I fell in love with Broughty Ferry, and I said to John: if we move here, this is where I want to live.”

“They were extremely helpful, friendly and welcoming, and we liked what we saw, but most of all we liked the scientific environment here at Ninewells.

“I came from the Max Planck Institute in Berlin, which focuses on one topic – molecular genetics. Under the German system it’s more difficult to build up collaborations with colleagues; it’s very hierarchical. Here it’s much more diverse; it’s definitely a nice and friendly place to work and we have good contacts with Life Sciences. There’s a really well established Centre for Neuroscience within the School of Medicine, and since I’m doing work in neuroscience we have lots of overlap and collaboration with colleagues. People are very supportive.

“This is another thing which is unique here at Dundee – there are opportunities for clinicians working in the School of Medicine to collaborate with basic scientists at the College for Life Sciences. I gave a talk there, we meet at seminars… They get something out of the clinical context which is important for them too.

“For example, recently I saw a child with Angelman Syndrome. Papers published recently imply that the phosphorylation of an important molecule influences the phenotype of these children. Within the College of Life Sciences here there are experts in protein phosphorylation, so I’m drafting a proposal now to see if we can together take a closer look at this molecule and collaborate to help cure these children.

“Going to clinics and seeing these children, and then being able to access leading international scientists nearby is wonderful. This is the secret of the University of Dundee – that a relatively small university in a relatively small city has this expertise and this focus.

“It’s also true for the city – in Berlin if I wanted to see my colleagues, I had to travel one and a half hours each way – here it takes ten minutes!”

Dundee is a fascinating site, it’s not a big city but you can easily travel to London, Glasgow or Edinburgh for a more metropolitan experience. With the development of the V&A, the city will be even more exciting...
Edwin Janssen

Edwin Janssen is Lecturer in Fine Art at Duncan of Jordanstone (DJCAD). Edwin and his wife Tracy Mackenna (Chair of Contemporary Art Practice and Associate Dean of Art within DJCAD), live in Dundee with their two children. Erasmus (nine) was born in Rotterdam, and named after the famous philosopher who was also born there, and Esméemilja (six) was born in Scotland.

“Dundee is ahead of the game compared to other art colleges in Scotland. This was reflected in the Research Assessment Exercise, and DJCAD offers staff excellent support and facilities. It’s a good place to work as both an artist and a researcher. In that sense Dundee is a special place.

“Dundee is a fascinating site, it’s not a big city but you can easily travel to London, Glasgow or Edinburgh for a more metropolitan experience. With the development of the V&A, the city will be even more exciting. The DCA plays an important role in the culture of Dundee, on all sorts of levels the relationship between the University and the DCA is very important. And with the arrival of the V&A, Dundee will stand out in Scotland.”

Edwin has found huge differences between what he was doing in his homeland and how he can operate here. “When I trained as an artist in The Netherlands, I wasn’t particularly inspired.

“I’ve always been interested in the intellectual and social context of art, a mixed practice, not just in making art. When I came to Scotland, things came together for me.

“This is the first time I’ve worked in academia, doing research, writing papers and research applications in academic language. Art students are not trained in that way, it’s only at Masters level that we teach research methods.

“Through my work for the College I have been able to move closer to what I want to do. I started a part-time PhD a year and a half ago, it’s on artist led curatorial practice; about artists who take up the role of curator and use their collections to create installations.

“For me the balance between teaching, my research and my art all interlink. I can’t imagine having a similar job in the Netherlands, or being able to do my PhD in this manner.”

Vicki Hanson

Vicki Hanson is Professor and Chair of Inclusive Technologies within the School of Computing.

“I wasn’t looking for jobs, but this one came along, and it was too good an opportunity to miss,” said Vicki Hanson, Professor and Chair of Inclusive Technologies within the School of Computing.

Hanson began at the University as a Visiting Professor in 2007, having been awarded a prestigious Leverhulme Trust grant. She had visited the University and city several times, and liked what she saw.

“My interest is in ways to improve the lives of people with disabilities and older people through the use of computer technology. I had already visited Dundee several times as the School of Computing here is a world leader in this area.”

It was the consistency of approach and the critical mass of researchers that attracted Vicki to Dundee.

“The work they do here is unique – this is the only school of computing in the world where for over 30 years they have created novel research methods and new technologies to assist older adults and people with disabilities. Sure, you get the odd academic or research student at departments elsewhere internationally interested in this topic, but Dundee is the only place where they have consistently looked at computer usability, accessibility and inclusion.”

Vicki’s career began in cognitive psychology, with a particular interest in the relationship between proficiency in sign language and reading ability in deaf children.

Before joining the School of Computing, Vicki was manager of Accessibility Research for IBM in New York State, where she worked for over 20 years.

“Everyone thinks that it must be a great contrast moving from New York to Dundee, but I was working 30 miles outside New York City in the countryside – it’s not like I just moved here from Manhattan!”

“It’s stunningly gorgeous here. Sure, you don’t get the extremes of weather – in New York it gets really hot and humid in the summer and you get months of heavy snow in the winter. Everyone told me that Dundee has its own micro climate, that the sun always shines and it never rains. I thought it was just a recruiting ploy – but it’s true!”

“A lot of our friends have been to stay, there are lots of castles round here to visit and they have all had a great time – in fact, next week we are getting our first repeat visitor – a friend who visited last year is coming back again they liked it so much.”
When Judy gets home from school she is full of news for her mum – what she did, who she played with, who she talked to during the day. Nothing remarkable there, you may think, other than the fact that Judy has cerebral palsy; her severe physical disabilities making it very difficult for her to communicate using her own voice.

The fact she now has the potential to engage her mum in detailed conversation is thanks to a groundbreaking research project by the School of Computing at Dundee including Dr Annalu Waller and Mr Rolf Black, in collaboration with partners at the University of Aberdeen and Capability Scotland.

‘How was School Today...?’ is a software system which uses a combination of technologies to enable children with disabilities such as cerebral palsy and learning difficulties to have conversations in a faster, more interactive way. This opens up a new world of communication for the children. The system uses sensors, swipe cards, and a recording device to gather information on what the child using the system has experienced at school that day. This can then be turned into an interactive story by the computer – using what is called natural language generation – which the pupils can then share when they get home. It is designed to support a more interactive narration, allowing children to easily talk about their school day.

Families who have helped trial the system prototype have been full of praise for the way it has helped open new areas of communication. One parent said, “We really enjoyed using How was School Today...? and hearing the stories. The programme enabled our child to talk easily and answer questions quickly, prompting more interaction and giving us a very detailed insight into her day.”

The project is part of a wide range of research conducted at the School of Computing into assistive technology, all designed at improving the quality of life for sections of society from the elderly to children with disabilities. The School has one of the world’s leading groups of researchers in augmentative and alternative communication, a field which aims to support individuals with limited or no functional communication.

“What we are seeing with ‘How was School Today...?’ and our other projects is the reward of more than 20 years of great work being done in the School in the area of augmentative and alternative communication by people like Alan Newell, John Arnott, Norman Alm, myself and Rolf,” said Dr Annalu Waller, one of the lead researchers on ‘How was School Today...?’

“We now have manufacturers of communication aids and other devices working very closely with us which means we can reduce the time lag between research and commercialisation.
“By improving the way we include end users in the design of technology, we are able to develop more usable systems which truly enhance the lives of people with complex disabilities.

“We are fundamentally engineers – we want to develop tools which will support people in the real world. In order to do this we need to understand the problems people experience in the context of their environments.”

‘How was a School Today...?’ is a perfect example. Communication aids for nonspeaking children have existed for some time; but these have not been designed to support personal narrative – talking about things that happened to us during the day and other personal experiences. Narratives (stories) are typical of everyday conversation and form the bulk of social interaction. The Dundee researchers, in collaboration with their partners, set out to provide a system which allows easy access to appropriate vocabulary and lets the children interact with parents, carers, teachers and friends in storytelling.

“For a child with severe motor disabilities and limited or no speech, holding a conversation is often very difficult and is limited to short one to two word answers,” said Rolf. “To tell a longer story, the child needs to form longer, more informative sentences. This can be very time consuming, putting a lot of strain on holding and controlling the conversation.

“The children know what they want to say but the difficulty so often is to get the vocabulary and then to string the words together. What we are striving to do is allow these children to have easy access to appropriate vocabulary and phrases, and to experience interactive conversations of the sort in which all partners contribute equally.

“The technology is still at a working prototype stage but the results we have had from early evaluation have been very promising.

The early results have shown that the type of conversation the users can engage in is totally different to what they could do with other communication devices – they are able to take control of the conversation!”

The system can start children down a path of storytelling, recognised as an essential part in developing all of our communication skills.

“Relating daily experiences is an essential part of developing both language and personality,” said Annalu. “In order to develop their communication skills beyond a very basic level children have to be able to engage in storytelling. It is something we all use from an early stage in the development of our communication skills and it is absolutely vital.

“With ‘How was School Today...?’ children are able to use computer generated language to share their own experiences in a more independent and natural way.”

Learning about the children’s experiences and seeing how a system could be developed that best meets their needs and those of the people around them is a key part of the entire process. Rolf spent weeks at a time on site at one of Capability Scotland’s Schools watching how pupils spent their day and how they interacted with their immediate environment.

“One of the absolutely key things with something like this is the simple question of whether it is going to work and be used – you have to make it very user-friendly,” said Rolf. “There is a lot of technology in schools just now which is not being used to its best, because to get it working at that level takes a lot of work and time, areas which are already under pressure. You have to make it easy to use, easy to adapt to.

“With this project we have been engaged with the users from the very beginning. We don’t want to design something that we later find out is awkward for them to use and that will sit and gather dust because no one has had the time or inclination to find out how to make the best use of it.

“As rehabilitation engineers, we sit between the users and the techie people. The system doesn’t have to be the most hi-tech. It just has to be efficient and work well.

“There are a lot of questions to be addressed in developing a system like this. In existing systems children have access to a vocabulary that has to be programmed in manually. That presents many challenges because this is a group who are not necessarily literate, typing may not be an option, but they still have to locate the vocabulary they want to use.

“At the moment one communication method is that children take a pre-programmed or recorded message home. Our system uses sensors which detect where the children have gone throughout their day, when they were there, what they did. That takes a lot of effort off the staff because they then don’t have to spend time programming or recording the messages for home.
"Removing that effort immediately makes it a lot more user friendly for the staff, who are key players in making this sort of technology work."

The headteacher of the research school confirms this. “In the time we were helping test the system we found it very useful to pupils, teachers, therapists and parents alike. It allows children to take control of the conversation without having to rely on help from us.”

The researchers have a personal insight into some of the communication issues faced by the children with cerebral palsy. Annalu herself has cerebral palsy, and Aberdeen colleague Dr Ehud Reiter has a son who has autism.

“Our own experiences give us an inkling of how difficult it can be to take part in every day communication and how difficult it can be for parents,” said Annalu. “Rolf has been working with children with severe disabilities for more than fifteen years and this gives him invaluable insight as well.”

The research team are now carrying out further evaluation of the ‘How was School Today...?’ system to examine how it could be used to support children with different levels and types of impairments, and widened out to incorporate conversations around other themes.

As Annalu reinforces, the aim is to provide as good, as enjoyable, and as normal a life as possible.

“We are trying to give these children the same experience as their non-disabled peers,” said Annalu. “We want these children to grow up as normally as possible – they should be telling stories, swearing, and being naughty! Most disabled children never get told off. They seldom get pushed to achieve beyond our limited expectations of what we think disabled children can do.

“The children with whom we work have severe disabilities but they can all achieve things beyond that which we think they can achieve.”

• ‘How was School Today...?’ was funded by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).
• Pupils from one of Capability Scotland's Schools were the first to trial the new system. Capability Scotland's Schools provide day and residential education, along with respite care, for children between 5 and 18 with severe and complex support needs.
• Capability Scotland campaigns with, and provides services to, disabled children and adults across Scotland, supporting them to achieve equality and have choice and control in their lives.

How was School Today...?

A child using “How was School Today...?” has access to automatically generated stories describing what they did during their day. The child can personalise the stories by easily adding comments to the narrative or deleting unwanted parts of it, and then use the technology to tell story to a parent or other communication partner.

The system involves a sensor being attached to the child’s wheelchair which tracks and records where they are going within their school day. The system compares the data with the child’s timetable to identify exceptions such as going to the school hall rather than the class room which can form the basis of an interesting event.

Swipe cards are then used by the teachers or carers who interact with the child to tell the system who the child has met and what activity they have been involved in.

A recording device is also incorporated in the system, which allows people who come into contact with the child to record more detailed information about the events which have taken place within the youngster’s day.

The sensor data is used to generate simple sentences using natural language generation techniques.

Natural language generation (NLG) is used to convert the sensor and other data into English, e.g. if the sensor data places the child in the hall at 1.30pm and the timetable states English for this time slot, the system would generate a sentence such as “After lunch I went to the hall rather than English class”.

NLG also allows the system to generate appropriate comments, e.g. if the child came into contact with a person called Anne who swiped her card to register her presence, the system might generate: “Anne was there.” If the child then chooses to add a positive comment by pressing a smiley face, the system would automatically generate “she is nice”, because it knows that Anne is female.

The long term aim of How was School Today...? will be to research the effects such a communication tool can have on language acquisition and communication skills of individuals with complex communication needs.
Tackling tropical dis
Disturbance of the sleep cycle, which gives the disease its name, is an important feature of the second stage of the disease. Confusion, sensory disturbances, poor coordination and bizarre behaviour are all symptoms of this second, more serious, stage.

Without treatment, sleeping sickness is fatal. With treatment, it still may be fatal for if the disease itself doesn’t kill sufferers, there is a grim chance that the treatment they receive will – some of the drugs currently used to treat the disease are arsenic-based and can have serious, even lethal, side effects.

Tragically for those thousands of sufferers, African sleeping sickness has long been a ‘neglected disease’, one which has not been the target of any great pharmaceutical effort to combat its terrible effects. The reasons for this are many and varied but prime among them is the simple but brutal fact that development of drugs costs money, drug companies are required by their shareholders to make a profit, and selling drugs to some of the most poverty stricken countries in the world was not going to generate significant revenues. Thus, the pharmaceutical company paradigm for successful drug discovery and development, which works so well for the developed world, needs partnership with public and international organisations to deliver not-for-profit therapeutics into the developing world.

That was one reason why in 2005 the University announced the formation of the Drug Discovery Unit at Dundee, a centre specifically aimed at filling the void of research and development of drug targets for diseases like African sleeping sickness, leishmaniasis (which affects millions of people in the tropics and sub-tropics and gained notoriety in this country when TV presenter Ben Fogle contracted a nasty case), and Chagas’ disease (which is endemic in South and Central America).
Gordon Brown, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, opened the Unit in January 2006 and declared, “This is a unit which gives hope to 30 million people in areas such as sub-Saharan Africa and India, and hope therefore for thousands of people who die unnecessarily and avoidably every year. The statement being made here today is that the expertise we have here at this great University is being used to help the poorest and neediest people of the world. The work that will be carried out in this unit is designed to save large numbers of lives for years to come. There are still diseases in the world that have been the subject of insufficient interest from the pharmaceutical companies. This unit, the only one of its kind in Europe, offers new hope and that is why the opening of it today is so important and truly path-breaking.”

More than three years on from then, progress is being made towards fulfilling that hope that Mr Brown talked about. “We are making considerable progress and if things continue to go well then I think we will have a candidate drug for development for African sleeping sickness within our initial five year target” said Professor Paul Wyatt, Director of the Drug Discovery for Tropic Diseases initiative. “To set up the Unit, recruit all the staff and then still produce something solid within five years is very ambitious and it was a hard target to set ourselves but, being cautiously optimistic, I think we can reach it.”

African sleeping sickness is the disease where the Unit’s work looks most likely to produce early and significant results. “The disease is very hard to treat,” said Professor Wyatt. “The first stage isn’t as serious but in the second stage, which it always progresses to if untreated, the disease is in the brain and attacks the central nervous system. Getting drugs into the brain, which can kill the parasites and not cause serious side effects is very difficult.”

“We have already made very good progress in developing compounds that are good killers of the parasites which cause the disease, and early testing shows these work well in the first stage of the disease. However, the World Health Organisation’s main goal is a good treatment for the second, more serious, stage of the disease and we are currently working towards that.”

The advances made in finding compounds relevant to African sleeping sickness are now being translated into exciting developments relating to leishmaniasis. “There is a level of optimism with leishmaniasis because we have some interesting compounds which could work for the disease,” said Professor Wyatt. “We have begun a major collaboration with the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) which will see us use the current knowledge and potential medicines developed within our African sleeping sickness programme as starting points for the discovery of medicines for leishmaniasis. It is a five-year collaboration where we will look to identify molecules capable of killing the leishmania parasite and then pass them on for further development into safe and effective medicines for clinical trials by DNDi’s other partner organisations.”

The Unit’s work is also leading to avenues of investigation in other disease areas. Some of the Unit’s compounds are now being screened for potential use against tuberculosis and there is a developing interest in malaria, which has led to discussions on further work with the Medicines for Malaria Venture. All of this is taking place within a subtly changing landscape in the pharmaceutical industry. Even only a few years ago, ‘big pharma’ was not showing significant interest in some of the neglected diseases, but that may now be changing. “The pharmaceutical companies are now getting more involved in neglected diseases,” said Professor Wyatt. “Their scientists are keen to engage with neglected diseases and the companies are being encouraged by governments and charitable funders to contribute more to this kind of work. They are also looking at emerging markets in developing countries and trying to see how they can access them. One way of doing that may be to help tackle local diseases.”

Some will undoubtedly view such sudden interest with a degree of cynicism but it is a move which Professor Wyatt welcomes. “You have to look at these things realistically, and the fact is that the pharmaceutical companies have the best capacity to develop and deliver new drugs. That is what they do, and if they can now apply that to tackling some of these really nasty, debilitating diseases then so much the better.”

“We have already had discussions with some of companies about how we can work together to help deliver new treatments for these diseases. This Unit was always intended as a bridge between academia and industry, to find and validate new drug targets and pass these on for development. If the big drug companies wish to get involved in that process then it can ultimately be only for the greater good. The target will always be to find effective, safe treatments for these diseases and to save tens of thousands of lives a year.”

That is a goal which lends a certain fervour to the work. Many of those that were recruited to work in the Unit left behind more lucrative rewards in the commercial sector to join the challenge at Dundee. “People are here because they feel they are working on something worthwhile,” said Professor Wyatt. “People working for companies are human beings, so they want to work on projects which genuinely impact on people’s health. And these are very serious diseases we are working on, which affect populations who can do very little about them. These aren’t the self-inflicted diseases of the developed world, such as obesity.”

“I think it brings a great level of professional satisfaction if we can find the answers to the terrible problems caused by these diseases.”

The notion to create the Drug Discovery Unit to tackle neglected tropical diseases came from discussions between Professors Mike Ferguson and Alan Fairlamb back in 2002. Professor Ferguson comments:
We are making considerable progress and if things continue to go well then I think we will have a candidate drug for development for African sleeping sickness within our initial five year target...

“Alan and I had been working on trypanosomes for longer than we care to admit – each of our teams making good progress to identify drug targets in the parasite but both of us, at the time, frustrated at our inability to translate those discoveries into drug leads in collaboration with the pharmaceutical industry. We decided that the best way forward would be to in-source the necessary science and skills from the industrial sector and build a Drug Discovery Unit, literally from the ground up.”

This pact between themselves, and Professors Bill Hunter and Daan van Aalten, coincided with the expansion of the College of Life Sciences and the building of the Sir James Black Centre. With help from the Wolfson Foundation, the European Regional Development Fund and the Scottish Funding Council the first floor of this new building was constructed as a state-of-the-art drug discovery facility. Key appointments were made by the University in biotechnology (Prof Julie Frearson), medicinal chemistry (Prof Ian Gilbert) and computational chemistry (Dr Ruth Brenk) and negotiations with The Wellcome Trust lead to a major partnership, providing funding to appoint the Director of Drug Discovery for neglected diseases (Prof Paul Wyatt) and the computational and medicinal chemistry, molecular pharmacology and compound screening and drug metabolism and pharmacokinetics teams that have lead to current successes.

“It has been a great privilege to help empower such a talented team of dedicated people and to see true multi-disciplinary science tackle neglected diseases. Sometimes Alan and I marvel at how far the team have travelled in such a relatively short space of time” says Professor Ferguson.

One of the other exciting spin-offs of setting up drug discovery for neglected diseases has been the de-facto creation of a suite of technologies and expertise that is enabling colleagues across the University, and from outside of it, to translate their basic research towards possible therapeutic benefits in many other areas as well, for example in cancer, bacterial infections, Huntington’s disease and type-2 diabetes.

“There is, rightly, increasing pressure from government and charity funding organisations for scientists, when appropriate, to translate their basic science towards therapeutic and/or commercial outputs. Actually, many of us see that as a moral imperative, but what had been lacking were the mechanisms to achieve successful translation and de-risking of new potential drug targets. With the Drug Discovery Unit, we have succeeded in creating a translational engine that can move innovative ideas towards those outputs” says Professor Ferguson.

The Drug Discovery Unit at Dundee is in the vanguard of this translational movement.
The American political scene seems so different today than it did when Barack Obama’s presidency was just 100 days old. At that point in early May, President Obama’s job approval ratings were in the mid-sixties and many Democrats fervently hoped, even expected that this bright, impressive and handsome young president would be transformational. They envisioned that he would produce a long-needed restoration of the American health care system and push through a major climate change bill to curtail carbon emissions, before moving on to other areas of needed change.

Today, President’s Obama’s job approval ratings are scarcely above 50 percent and his twin signature issues for his first year, health care reform and climate change, are in great peril. The Democratic Party’s advantage over Republicans in terms of party identification has plummeted from 17 points in January to just five points in August. It is a sure sign that the momentum they enjoyed from 2006 through 2008 is over, and plenty of signs actually indicate that the momentum has reversed, increasing the possibility of Republican gains in the 2010 midterm elections.

With just one-third of the 100-member U.S. Senate up for reelection next year, it is virtually impossible for Republicans to retake control of the upper chamber. However, it is possible that Democrats could sustain heavy losses in the U.S. House, and potentially even lose their 40-seat majority, with all 435 of House Members facing voters next year.

The question is how could so much go so wrong for this incredibly intelligent and visionary young leader?

For President Obama and Congressional Democrats, the drop in support among Republican voters is to be expected and the declines among Democratic voters have been modest. It’s the sharp drop among independents, those who don’t identify with either party and are the swing voters in American politics, which matters. Self-identified independent voters backed Democrats by an 18-point margin in 2006, with 57 percent voting Democratic and 39 percent voting Republican. In the previous midterm election, in 2002, the GOP share of the independent vote had been nine points higher.
This strong Democratic performance among independents effectively delivered Democrats their U.S. House and Senate majorities in 2006, driven by concerns about the war in Iraq and a litany of Republican scandals.

In 2008, independents again voted strongly in favor of Democrats and Obama, but the large turnout of young and minority voters also proved critical in helping Democrats build even bigger majorities. Antipathy toward President Bush, a desire to punish the GOP, and the economic downturn late in the campaign combined to give Republicans a second costly defeat.

But that was then and this is now. As recently as late spring and early summer, President Obama's approval rating in the Gallup Organization's weekly average ran in the sixties among independents. But in August, they have been in the mid-to-high forties. Independents often provide the balance of power in American politics, and when a president or party has lost the confidence of those independent voters, they are in deep trouble.

As problematic as the drop in independent support is for Democrats and President Obama, what is worse is the fact that the intensity and energy that Democrats had in 2006 and 2008 has now been replaced with division and lethargy. Republicans and conservatives are now the ones who are angry and enthusiastic, something that is important to have in midterm elections which invariably have lower turnout than presidential elections. Furthermore, in midterm elections, the proportion of young voters always declines and the key pivotal group becomes white senior citizens, a group that has long been particularly difficult for President Obama to win over.

So, what happened? It is becoming increasingly clear that while most were fixated on last fall's campaign, Obama's victory and inauguration and the first 100 days of his Presidency, two other dynamics were developing as well. The September 15 default by Lehman Brothers triggered a chain of events: credit markets seized up, stock markets crashed and the global economy plunged into the worst recession since the Great Depression. This economic trauma terrified many, with people fearing for their jobs, and worrying about their incomes and retirement savings. More broadly, they wondered about their own futures and the futures of their children and grandchildren. Not surprising, many went into a "hunker down" mode, the political and economic equivalent of a fetal position, apprehensive and skeptical about taking any risks.

At the same time, the public's already skeptical confidence in the government's ability to solve problems, led in large part by the mishandling of Hurricane Katrina, the first few years of the war in Iraq, and the failure to control mounting government spending before the recession, was hurt even more by the failure of the Federal government to effectively regulate financial institutions.

It is important to view the American electorate in three groups: blue, red and purple. The blue America, made up of Democrats and liberals, is usually predisposed to expansionary government. Thus, they are less troubled by the intervention into the banking and auto industries. Red America, populated by Republicans and conservatives, can be reliably expected to oppose such things, almost regardless of the circumstances.

It's the skepticism of purple America, made up of moderates and independents in swing states and districts that can sway back and forth, that is having an enormous impact on the process. If the economy was strong and expanding, purple America might be more open to such efforts. But in a time of apprehension and downright fear, they become more cautious, more skeptical and are easily swayed into downright opposition. It wasn't that the public cared that the head of General Motors was fired; it was the fact that the Federal government fired him that struck them as frightening.

Arguably, many of these efforts, both by the Bush Administration last year and under Obama this year, were necessary, and prevented the U.S. and perhaps even the world economy from sliding into a second depression. But that view is not widely held by the public. What may well have been a triumph of government preventing a total economic collapse is instead feared to be the beginning of something ominous, a potentially irreversible concentration of power.

Against this backdrop, President Obama took office with a health care and climate change agenda that only exacerbated the fear in purple America that the expansion of government was going too far, too fast and in fundamental and potentially irreversible ways. Indeed, at the core of the many objections political leaders faced in the Congressional town meetings and political arguments over health care this past summer, was a fear that government was taking on too much and an apprehension that the Federal government was growing too big and too powerful.

Ironically, it was senior citizens, those over 65 years of age, who are now enrolled in the Medicare program, a government-run health care program, which expressed many of the loudest objections. Almost 80 percent of Americans have some form of health insurance, whether private or government-run for the elderly, veterans, the poor or those in government service.

The overwhelming majority of those with insurance is reasonably satisfied with it and fears that expanding health insurance coverage more widely will jeopardize the quality of their own care, or force those who already have health insurance to pay either higher taxes or higher insurance premiums. If the economy was strong, perhaps many would feel plush enough to be willing to pay somewhat more for expanded coverage.
But in a recession, with many household budgets already stretched thin, that generosity is diminished and fear of change amplified. At the same time, mindful of mistakes made by the Clinton White House of sending proposals to Congress that were often unceremoniously spurned by the Democratic majorities of the time, the Obama White House opted for a very different strategy. The idea was to let Congressional Democrats take the lead role in formulating proposals as a way of their taking ownership in their outcome.

But that strategy resulted in two mistakes. First, the Democratic Congressional leadership was scornful of the concept of bipartisanship, paying lip service at best to the idea, in direct contradiction to one of the pillars of what was to be a transformational Obama Presidency. While there certainly are Democrats on Capitol Hill who value bipartisanship, for the most part, they are not in the leadership.

Second, while presidents are rarely successful at dictating specific proposals to Congress, President Obama’s vague guidance was seen as effectively outsourcing domestic policy to an institution held in disdain by the public. The damage to President Obama from his delegation of responsibility to Congress can be seen in his diminished numbers in the polls on such characteristics as “strength” and “leadership.”

President Obama is seen as having sent suggestions, rather than proposals, to Congress, staking his future and reputation on a body that is viewed dimly by the public. It’s worthy of note that on foreign policy matters, where Congress plays little role, President Obama’s job approval ratings are quite good. It’s on the domestic side, that which Congress has a substantial role, in which his numbers are dismal.

With 14 months to go before the 2010 midterm elections, there is a lot that can and will happen. But when we have seen wave elections hit, more often than not, they start just like this. Plummeting job approval ratings, losing the advantage on the generic Congressional ballot, seeing the intensity of opposition party voters skyrocket while your own voters become complacent or even depressed, independent voters lopsidedly moving against you; these are the diagnostic signs that warned us about past wave elections and should terrify Democrats today.

So, what happens next? If we look back at the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, both newly elected presidents had significant losses in their first midterm elections. In 1982, Republicans lost 26 seats in the House, and in 1994, Democrats lost 54 seats and their majorities in both Chambers. Both administrations scaled back their agendas, and were easily re-elected two years later. Both are now seen as successful presidential careers.

It should be remembered that Jimmy Carter was the only U.S. President in the 20th century to take the White House from the opposite party and then lose re-election four years later. The challenge is for parties to hold onto the presidency after eight or even 12 years, not after just four. With over one year left before the November 2010 midterm election and over three years to go before President Obama faces the voters himself, it is far too early to write him off, but the challenges he now faces are formidable and as of now, not diminishing.
Later this year Edinburgh University Press is publishing *Everyday Life in Twentieth Century Scotland*, co-edited by Professor Callum Brown of the School of Humanities at Dundee and Professor Lynn Abrams of the School of History at the University of Glasgow. The book explores the changing nature of everyday experience – from home and work, culture and masculine culture, the presbyterian psychological inheritance, to the changing nature of intimacy. In this timely article based on one of his chapters, Professor Brown looks at how the battle for the observance of the Christian Sunday continued through much of the century, and ended in 2009.
In July 2009, the last great battle of Scotland’s Sabbath Wars ended. The first regular CalMac ferry sailed from Stornoway to Ullapool on a Sunday, cheered by 200 supporters and only a few dozen protesters. So ended centuries of struggles by presbyterian reformers to impose a Sabbath shutdown on all Scots, irrespective of their religious views.

At the start of the twentieth century, the shutdown Sabbath was the norm across the whole of Scotland. Few shops opened, there were no open public houses, and no commercial entertainments. Little work was done expect by a small number of enterprises that needed 7-day operation. Most factories closed, and church attendance was the norm for perhaps a third of the people.

But there were daring entrepreneurs trying to cater for new tastes. On 2 July 1905, 2000 people led by Protestant ministers gathered after Sunday worship on the promenade in Lerwick in Shetland to protest with hymn singing outside the ice-cream and aerated-water shop run by Harry Corrothie, an Italian Catholic immigrant, who had the nerve to do Sunday business. Italian ice-cream shops were mushrooming all over Scotland, and they became a focus for Sabbatarian ire. At Lerwick, a moral contest was started that was to lead, in 1913, to victory by the ‘anti-ice-cream party’ at town council elections. ‘To me’, wrote one of the victors of the anti-ice-cream campaigners, ‘the contest appeared to be the Churches of Lerwick versus Socialism. The philistines have been routed before the Ark of the Lord.’

Battles like that in Lerwick continued to rage in Scotland throughout the twentieth century. Contests occurred over many things. Until the 1960s, children’s swings were routinely padlocked on Sundays in playparks operated by some Scottish councils. Most golf courses, notably those on council land, were closed on Sundays. Even knockabouts with a football in the streets were subject to Sunday arrests until the 1950s. But it was Sunday ferries in the Hebrides that were the focus of the biggest contest between sabbatarians and liberals. In June 1965, 300 protestors prayed and sang psalms at the slipway at Kyleakin on Skye trying to prevent the first Sunday ferry from landing. The Reverend Angus Smith of the Free Church lay down in front of the first car, was arrested and carried away by policemen; saying: ‘It is a sad, sad day for this God-fearing island of ours.’

The consequence was that in the 1960s and early 1970s, when the social pressure for shop opening grew very rapidly, there was no legal impediment in Scotland. Unlike in England and Wales, there was an almost total cave-in by the Sabbath-keeping system. For this reason, the Scottish Sunday went from being unusually strict before 1960 to being after 1980 one of the most liberal in the whole of Europe. The collapse of the Scottish Sunday was quicker, more dramatic and less contested than in England, Wales, France, Germany or most of the Nordic countries, where laws and various complex pressures keep Sundays even today as anything but ordinary.
The Sabbath in memory

The Scottish Sabbath lives strong in the memory of older Scots. For many, the central activity was going to church — sometimes two or three times a day. For children, attendance at church services, Sunday schools and bible classes, again often twice and for many three times per day, was widespread until the late 1930s, and though diminishing somewhat thereafter, Sunday morning attendance remained a norm in the 1940s, 50s and early 60s.

When asked in the late 1980s how they spent Sundays in their youth, Scots born early in the century typically responded: ‘Very, very quiet. Well, you went out walking, with my father. I went to church, went to Sunday School, the church and then Sunday School, and you’d come home and you had your meal. Very, very quiet. Well, you went out walking, with my father.

The religious observance of children was almost universal; as your books, sit perched up on the chair, read your books.’ Well if it was a wet day you didnae get out. You’d to sit and read your books, sit perched up on the chair, read your books.

The religious observance of children was almost universal; as your books, sit perched up on the chair, read your books.’

A second common recollection was the banning of pleasures. In Cupar in Fife ‘... we were never allowed to have any ball, any games at all on a Sunday. That was one thing, we were never allowed on a Sunday.’ Many recalled a very strict home Sabbath, including those from Lowland urban areas: ‘Sunday! You wouldnæ dare lift a pair of scissors to cut your nails. My mother used to say that all the Sundays of the world would come down on your head if you cut your nails on a Sunday’.

The third big recollection, notable in working-class families, was of special diets on Sundays. The most crucial difference was not Sunday lunch, but Sunday breakfasts. On weekdays the staple was porridge, but on Sundays it was often ham and eggs, pancakes and scones, and steak, kippers or Finnan haddock.

A fourth thing remembered was Sunday-best clothes. Women recalled with great joy rehearsing their femininity through wearing fine dresses, coats, hats and gloves to go to church. One woman who grew up in Cowie in Stirlingshire in the 1920s was typical: ‘You had a Sunday outfit you see, you only wore it on a Sunday, no other day except a Sunday. You weren’t allowed to wear your Sunday best for playing about with. So the one that I looked forward to is a Sunday just for that. Keep my Sunday clothes on.

A fifth recollection was of Sunday work. Many adults had to undertake waged labour in Scotland in the early part of the century — in the Post office, in iron and steel blast furnaces that couldn’t be allowed to go out, and on the trams and emergency services. But most other big enterprises closed. By 1914, most shipyards, coal mines and factories closed on Sundays. Fishing boats and fish processing sometimes were at work, though this was frowned upon.

Attempts at liberalisation of Sundays came during the two world wars, but the rules were re-imposed with a venom in the 1920s and again in the late 1940s.

An Edinburgh Sunday in the mid 1950s was pictured by journalists as ‘grim and cheerless’, with groups of the ‘denied generation’ of young people moving round the few open cafes (mostly at the railways stations, museums and other public venues) looking for some diversion. Teenagers in ‘the soul-less Sabbath’ would walk round and round the Royal Scottish Academy and the Chambers Street museum ‘looking for a click until we were almost dizzy, and not know how to entertain one even if we scored’. It was regarded as ‘bliss’ when in around 1960 the Scottish Office permitted one cinema in each town to open for free on Sunday evenings to show ‘health films’, with queues stretching to legendary proportions and needing police to control them.

The Sunday revolution

The ‘swinging sixties’ in Scotland meant, above all else, the beginning of the destruction of Sabbath observance. In the Lowlands, games began in parks, there were widespread parties and socialising, and DIY stores and supermarkets opened for business. It was part of a wider challenge to authority and the establishment, as well as part of a tremendous collapse in church membership and religious rites of passage. Pubs finally opened on Sundays in 1975, ending decades of the fiction of the ‘bone fide’ traveller who drove or took a tram for 5 miles to sign a register in a hotel to get a Sunday drink.

Yet, not everything was immediately liberalised. In the Highlands and Hebrides, The Free Church and Free Presbyterian Church had a strong hold of Sabbath sanctity, and little could be done on Sundays in public until the dawn of the 21st century. Sunday labour was strictly confined to acts of ‘necessity and mercy’, and public transport was rare. But by the late 1990s, even the mecca of strict Presbyterianism, Stornoway, was much transformed. The town was described on a Saturday as a hotbed of drink and violence for bored young people, and by 2000 children could be found out on bikes, kicking a football in the streets and on play equipment in the public park.

In October 2002 the first scheduled Sunday flights to Stornoway started, presaging the collapse of the ban on Sunday ferries in 2008 and 2009. The impact on the islands is likely to be dramatic. The sabbatarian cause has lost its core cause celebre, and pressure from incomers, young people and a growing non-churchgoing public will be for the normalisation of Sunday shopping, drinking and entertainment. The last sabbatarian redoubt has fallen. The Sabbath Wars are over.
SURREAL THINGS
V&A Touring Exhibition
The University of Dundee has, for the past two years, been at the forefront of the V&A at Dundee Project Steering Group. The project, which aims to establish a presence for the Victoria & Albert Museum at the heart of the city’s waterfront redevelopment took a massive step forward in August when Michael Russell MSP, Minister for Culture, External Affairs & the Constitution, announced the Scottish Government’s intention to back the V&A at Dundee. University Director of External Relations, Joan Concannon, explains why making V&A at Dundee happen is so vital for the city of Dundee.

“The V&A at Dundee will happen” – those were the opening words of the Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution, Michael Russell MSP at a press conference on 17th August this year. The announcement that the Scottish Government would guarantee a significant financial investment for a major project to bring the V&A to Dundee represented the culmination of more than two years hard work to secure government support for the V&A at Dundee.

The Victoria & Albert Museum might seem on the face of it to be an odd bedfellow for the city of Dundee – but in fact it is the perfect marriage for a city that had established its credentials early on as a place prepared to be bold and visionary by linking cultural policy to economic regeneration. 10 years ago this year Dundee Contemporary Arts centre opened its doors – what was regarded as a potential white elephant for the city has, in fact, developed an international reputation for excellence in contemporary fine art bringing some of the world’s finest contemporary artists to Dundee.
The V&A's portfolio of excellence in applied arts is almost exactly complementary to the hinterland occupied by the University of Dundee's art college, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design and the University of Abertay, Dundee. DJCAD’s reputation, sealed at the last Research Assessment Exercise as the top art school in Scotland for art and design and in the top 10% in the UK has, under the leadership of Professor Georgina Follett, been a key driving force in developing the V&A at Dundee concept.

Broadly that concept harnesses opportunity and ambition in equal parts. Opportunity in the sense that Dundee has already been engaged in an ambitious waterfront development plan for more than a decade and soon broad tracts of land will be cleared to reconnect the city of Dundee to its most beautiful asset – the river Tay. Ambition for the city is central to the proposal to create a beautiful building at the heart of this waterfront development which will house contemporary collections from the V&A and showcase the best of Scottish applied arts.

There is plenty of evidence from as far afield as Pittsburgh and Bilbao and nearer to home in Newcastle Gateshead and Middlesbrough, of the catalytic effects that inspiring architecture, combined with innovative cultural projects, can have on cities that have suffered from negative perception.

But these examples all indicate that stunning architecture on its own is not enough to bring sustainable change – big cultural projects must be linked to a broader investment strategy and have a strong connection with its locale. We strongly believe that the strength of the creative talents already present in Dundee and the existence of the city’s waterfront strategy will enable the V&A at Dundee project to succeed.

But why do we need the V&A at Dundee? Dundee is no stranger to experiencing the frustration of a negative public image – that is at least ten years out of date. The city has expended considerable investment and energy into revamping the city centre but this has not translated into positive perception outside of two niche areas – life sciences and digital and gaming industries. Indeed a recent Scottish Enterprise study reflected that the major concern of businesses (including its universities) across Tayside was related to the city and region’s negative public perception which hinders their ability to attract skilled workers to the area.

A “wow” factor project such as working with the V&A was from the early stages of its development one that met with huge enthusiasm from both the business community and the artistic and creative community. V&A at Dundee has already demonstrated huge amounts of positive media coverage – indicating indeed that a major project like this has the power to influence perception. We believe that this project has the ability to inspire new generations of people to come to visit, study, live and work in Dundee.

V&A at Dundee is conceived to be a project that adds value and substance to what is already present in the Scottish cultural scene. It categorically does not seek to replicate what other institutions in Scotland do very well. But the simple fact is that there is no physical environment in Scotland large enough to showcase Scottish applied arts or indeed attract the V&A “blockbuster” exhibitions such as Surrealism, China Now, Cold War Design and so on that have toured round the world and been seen by millions of people.
Further there are enormous opportunities for the Scottish cultural sector to engage with and develop exciting collaborations with an international power-house such as the V&A and develop other international partnerships as well.

The V&A attracts more than 2 million visitors annually to its London home and more than 2.5m people saw a range of exciting touring exhibitions in venues ranging from Shanghai to Toronto, Melbourne and Bilbao in 2008/9. The V&A website attracts almost 18 million hits per year – the opportunity therefore to market Dundee as a destination which houses not just blockbuster V&A exhibitions, but is at the cutting edge of contemporary curation and presenting the best applied arts in an innovative and beautiful building, is hugely seductive. The project has been embraced by politicians across the political spectrum, the applied arts community and the Tayside business community.

The V&A at Dundee project has been steered by representatives from the University of Dundee, Abertay Dundee, Scottish Enterprise and Dundee City Council and, of course, senior representation from the V&A itself.

The V&A at Dundee concept has been rigorously “tested” in a two phase feasibility study conducted by Whetstone Group in association with Conran & Partners. The study concluded that a £42m building housing contemporary collections from the V&A would succeed in attracting up to 500,000 visitors (Dundee currently only attracts 5% of Scotland’s tourists – most of which are visiting family and friends in the area) per year as well as creating 900 jobs and adding more than £5m to the local economy.

The feasibility study was launched at a major conference in February 2009 with delegations from Bilbao, Newcastle Gateshead and Middlesbrough – all of whom have been involved in similar projects which allied urban regeneration and cultural innovation – were laudatory in their praise for the project and felt no hesitation in commending the project as both economically viable and hugely exciting.

Since then the project has gathered increased momentum and the announcement on 17th August by the Scottish Government that they provide significant financial support for V&A at Dundee is a crucial milestone. This Government ‘green light’ enables the V&A at Dundee Steering Group to go forward with the creation of a charitable company which will oversee the completion of a robust business plan, launch a public fundraising campaign, launch an international design competition and oversee the delivery of the project.

V&A at Dundee is an ambitious and exciting project – and one that the city of Dundee and indeed Scotland richly deserves.

There is plenty of evidence from as far afield as Pittsburgh and Bilbao and nearer to home in Newcastle Gateshead and Middlesbrough, of the catalytic effects that inspiring architecture, combined with innovative cultural projects, can have on cities that have suffered from negative perception.
Taking on the torturers

“If the phone goes and they want me to go somewhere then it’s almost certain something bad has happened.” For Professor Derrick Pounder ‘something bad’ has become part and parcel of daily working life, as he lends his forensic expertise to establishing exactly what has happened in a grim parade of injuries, assaults and deaths.

Professor Pounder is Director of the Centre for Forensic and Legal Medicine at the University of Dundee, which provides forensic autopsy and toxicology services to procurators fiscal in the Tayside, Fife and Central regions. The range of cases investigated includes road traffic fatalities, suicides, accidents at home and at work, homicides and sudden natural deaths, as well as in-hospital deaths under anaesthesia and other unexpected hospital deaths.

But over the past 25 years Professor Pounder has also brought his skills to bear in an international forum, investigating alleged cases of torture around the world. He is a member of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and an expert to the International Criminal Court.

Torture continues to be used by governments around the world as a highly controversial means of extracting information from people they consider in some way to be a threat. It has of course been at the centre of the news agenda in recent times through allegations of mistreatment of internees at Guantanamo Bay and the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, as well as numerous other unsavoury incidents.
To Professor Pounder, torture is a stain on any society where it is used. “The only difference between torture and an assault in the street is that torture is carried out by the state and for a specific purpose,” he said.

“The view that some governments will hold is that the positive outcome of torture, the information it may bring, justifies the very negative behaviour of committing the torture. That is not acceptable – torture cannot be justified in law. Torture is a crime that can never be excused.”

Professor Pounder became involved in helping combat torture in the 1980s, when he realised he could marry his professional skills with a longstanding interest in human rights.

“I had always been interested generally in human rights, in the sense of the underdog prevailing and in politics in a wider sense. Then by chance I came to realise that my professional skills could be applied in the field of supporting human rights. In the mid-1980s there were some 20 or 30 forensic scientists, doctors and so on who came to realise that we had something unique to offer that could be of great value. The initiative was led by a Danish group who were involved in the medical section of Danish Amnesty International, and from that developed an international network that I got involved with.
At that time campaigning against torture was very heavily reliant on things like witness statements. But then Amnesty and others began to realise that forensics could be used to help support a case. We had skills that we applied in our normal work that could be of value in human rights work – for instance, establishing whether or not someone may have been assaulted. It is very much the same as the work we do for the legal system at home, using forensics to establish whether an injury supports the allegation that is being made. It provides objective evidence.

“The ethical position of the forensic expert is that we should have no interest in the outcome of a case – it does not matter what we think of any accused and we should not let such a view influence our opinion in any way whatsoever. It is of utmost importance not to abuse the privilege of the position of being an expert. You may be working with campaigners who want you to conclude that someone has been tortured, but that cannot influence your findings. The strength of the evidence lies not only in the science but also in our credibility as experts. And you have to acknowledge that sometimes the medical evidence will not corroborate the allegation that has been made.

“So my interest in protecting human rights leads me to offer my professional services, but it cannot in any way influence what my scientific findings are.”

Carrying out this kind of work presents unique challenges. Torture is by its nature a generally secret practice and one carried out by practitioners who can be highly skilled in a very dark art.

“The problem as a forensic scientist is that torture is invariably carried out behind closed doors where there are no independent witnesses and often by professionals who can be skilled in spoiling any investigations,” explained Professor Pounder. “Forensically that presents a problem for a variety of reasons, most notably in seeking corroboration of an allegation, which is the ultimate purpose of what we do.

“One of the methods we will use is to go to a prison and speak to all of the recently admitted prisoners, asking them about their treatment at the hands of the police, where they were held, how they were treated and so on. We will then go to the police station and see if the rooms and tools there match the descriptions we have been given.

“It can be the most innocuous things. There are very sophisticated forms of torture that on the face of it are utterly mundane. There is nothing that is intrinsically suspicious about a room that contains two tables and a metal bar. But if someone has told you that they were trussed up and then suspended from a metal bar resting across two tables, it starts to take on greater significance. And if you then find scratches on the tabletops that look to have been caused by the same metal bar, then you are moving along the road to verifying the account.

“We will also ask alleged victims to give details of their torture, as an honest account can give great credibility to their claims. If they can accurately describe the experience of asphyxiation, or the effects of electrical wire being applied to their flesh, then you may conclude they are not making it up.”
The nature of the cases Professor Pounder is asked to help investigate are invariably grisly. But there have been considerable successes in exposing torture and shaming authorities into banning certain practices.

“I was in Israel in the mid-1990s, at a time when it was known that the Israelis were using a number of ‘interview techniques’ that were simply torture. One of the things they were doing was called ‘shaking’, where the subject would be grabbed by the lapels while handcuffed and really quite violently jerked and shaken. These were individuals who may already be sleep deprived, maybe hadn’t had adequate food or water, and may be quite weak.

“What then happened is that Israeli intelligence killed someone in custody while they were being interrogated. Through the extended network of human rights organisations I was ultimately asked to go and look at this by Physicians for Human Rights in the USA. A court order allowed me to be present at the autopsy, although there wasn’t any information at the autopsy of what had precisely happened.

“The body showed bruising on the front of the chest and the man had suffered a subdural haemorrhage of the brain, and it appeared likely he had died of some kind of brain injury. The pattern of injury, I thought, was similar to what I had seen in child abuse where a child is shaken.

“The lawyer acting for the family was to phone the Israeli police and I told him not to ask whether they had shaken the man, but instead to ask how many times they had shaken him. They replied, ‘How did you know?’ They later admitted in court that the man had collapsed while being shaken.

“That was a technique which had been approved for use at the very highest level – the committee that had approved it included the most senior members of the Israeli government at that time. Ultimately the technique was deemed unlawful and they banned it. It is a very good illustration of how the human rights network can effect change, with forensics playing a part in it.”

Torture is still being used around the world. In some places it has become more prevalent, while other states have moved away from it. Professor Pounder acknowledges we are a long way from seeing its use eradicated, but is optimistic that things are getting better.

“I am ultimately an optimist,” he said. “A police colleague from the FBI once told me there are two types of people in the world, those that look at humanity and conclude that there are a small minority of people that are bad, and those who look at it and think the good and the bad are evenly balanced. Police officers tend to fall in to the second category, but I am very much in the first.

“The Council of Europe’s Committee for the Prevention of Torture has over 40 countries as members, all of whom have signed a treaty for the prevention of torture. As a condition of their membership the committee must be allowed access to all places of detention, be able to visit any part of the building and be able to see anyone, all without notice. That has resulted in considerable improvements. When I work as an expert for the committee I can knock of the door of an FSB (formerly KGB) building in Russia and demand entrance. If I had tried that 25 years ago I almost certainly would have ended up locked inside the building rather than inspecting it.

“I have been to places like South Africa and Turkey and seen great changes there and seen basic human rights improve markedly. So now when I look at places with a problem, such as Chechnya, I can still be optimistic.

“I went to Turkey twice, ten years apart, and there has been a great change there in reducing torture, I think partly driven by the government’s desire to enter the European Union, which does show that if a government has the desire then the use of torture can be stopped. The problem is impunity – if police officials or the military know there are no consequences for them then they will continue to do what they do.

“Changes in attitude are generational. You need an entire generation to have moved through something before it becomes the norm. There has to be that level of change from a situation where there is an acceptance that torture happens and it is entirely normal, to the stage where it is properly regarded as something that should never happen and is absolutely not normal.

“The course of human history has shown us that progress does not always come quickly. Sometimes it can be very slow, sometimes it can even move into reverse – there is no guarantee that human history will be progressive. That after all is why we endured centuries of the Dark Ages! But we have become used in more recent times to progression so that is what we expect to see. Dramatic change is what we always want to see, but it far from often actually happens.

“But try and change we must. If we walk away from the issue and say it is too hard to change, then of course if will never get better. We have to take these things on.”
David Peace is the award-winning author of the Red Riding Quartet, GB84, The Damned Ltd, Tokyo Year Zero and Occupied City. He was one of the many star names to appear at this year’s Dundee Literary Festival, where he spoke to Allan Brown of the Sunday Times about his life, work and influences, as well as reading extracts from his novels.

Having written eight critically acclaimed novels in 10 years and seen highly successful adaptations of his work appear on both big and small screens, it wouldn’t be altogether surprising if a degree of smugness had crept into David Peace’s demeanour.

However, it is a mark of the man’s humility and honesty that, rather than bask in the glory of being widely recognised as one of the UK’s finest contemporary novelists, he refuses to accept credit he believes to be undue, talks candidly about what he sees as his own limitations, and has become ever more reliant on his own peculiar numerological superstitions as the success has come flooding in.

Born in the West Yorkshire market town of Ossett in 1967, Peace’s first forays into the world of literature came early on in life. His first book was completed at the age of seven or eight, he explains with a characteristically self-effacing laugh when asked what made him first pick up the pen.

“My Dad wanted to be a writer, and I remember being a very small child and he would finish his tea and go off and write,” he said. “You weren’t allowed to disturb him so I don’t know if it maybe came from that.”
“I remember once sneaking in to read what he’d written. It was still on the typewriter roller, and I just remember it was about a kid breaking a window. I’m sure there must’ve been more to the story than that, but that’s all I remember!”

Peace’s Yorkshire upbringing has had a huge influence on his writing, which draws upon fact to create fiction. The majority of his novels to date have been based upon infamous incidents in the county’s recent history, including Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe’s murder of 13 women in the area between 1975 and 1980.

The resulting Red Riding Quartet – Nineteen Seventy-Four, Nineteen Seventy-Seven, Nineteen Eighty and Nineteen Eighty-Three, dealt with police corruption against a backdrop of the murders, and became a trilogy when Channel 4 adapted the series for television earlier this year.

Peace is a huge fan of the films, although he is loathe to accept credit for them, insisting instead that scriptwriter Tony Grisoni is the man worthy of praise.

“The Red Riding films, I think, are fantastic. I just can’t take any credit for them. I was living in Tokyo and had no real input into them. They sent me the scripts and I read them and thought they were brilliant. Tony Grisoni did a brilliant job but I didn’t offer any criticism of them or anything.

“I thought really highly of the work, particularly Nineteen Seventy-Four, because it’s not a book I particularly like anymore and was nervous about. I think with Nineteen Seventy-Four, particularly, I think it’s a much better film than it is a book.

“My reservations about Nineteen Seventy-Four, are that I made it up, to be honest. When I wrote Nineteen Seventy-Four, I set it in a real time and a real place and the background is accurate, but the child murders that occur, and are followed up in Nineteen Eighty-Three, didn’t actually take place.

“When I was about two-thirds of the way through Nineteen Seventy-Four, I realised that what I wanted to write about was the Yorkshire Ripper. Of course I had deep reservations about writing about the Yorkshire Ripper as entertainment, but I had particular reservations about Nineteen Seventy-Four because I think the violence is overdone, and it’s voyeuristic. I think in many ways Nineteen Eighty-Three was an apology for Nineteen Seventy-Four.”

As a teenager growing up in a county gripped by fear as one of Britain’s most notorious serial killers remained at large, Peace was able to gauge first hand the mood of the time. By geographical fluke, he also ended up being part of the mob that greeted Sutcliffe ahead of his first court appearance.

His daily journey from Ossett to the nearby town of Batley, where his school was located, caused Peace and his classmates to change buses in Dewsbury, where the Ripper confessed to his crimes.

He explained, “My dad used to always wake me up with the news each morning, so about a month before he woke me with the news that John Lennon had been shot. That day must’ve been one of the first days back after the Christmas holiday and he said “they’ve caught him” and instantly you knew what he meant.

“People had home-made nooses and signs and placards so yeah, I can remember all that very clearly.”

Yorkshire remained the setting for Peace’s next two books, both of which were also inspired by real events. GB84 (2004) is a fictional portrayal of the Miners’ Strike, and features real-life characters such as the dispute’s main protagonists, Margaret Thatcher and Arthur Scargill.

Unpalatable boardroom negotiations, violent coalfield confrontations at Yorkshire pits, and the growing political and economic divisions within 1980s Britain are all dealt with in the novel, which earned Peace the prestigious James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Literature in 2005.

From there, he switched his attentions to the legendary Brian Clough’s infamous and ill-fated 44-day tenure as manager of Leeds United. Here, Peace delves deep into the mind of a man widely acknowledged as a genius within footballing circles.

The portrayal of Clough as a hard-drinking egotist hungry for success but riven by deep seated insecurities drew criticism from many who derided inaccuracies and a misrepresentation of a man held in great affection within the football fraternity.

Indeed, it is a measure of the game’s ubiquity and influence that, even for a man who had previously written about a notorious serial killer and an industrial confrontation that still scars the country’s consciousness 25 years later, Clough proved to be Peace’s most controversial subject matter to date.
Clough’s widow and children were among those who expressed their displeasure, and Peace insists this is something he profoundly regrets.

“With the Clough family, my understanding from mutual friends was that they had no problem with the book at all, and then something, somewhere, went a bit wrong. In particular, I think it was to do with the film. I can say I wrote 90% of the book while Mr Clough was alive, so I wasn’t writing it because he was dead and I thought I could get away with it.

“As I was writing it, I’d actually made a big point to myself of not using his wife’s, or his children’s names, because even though he was a very public figure...he was someone who was on television and had newspaper columns, and went on Parkinson...at the time the book is set, his wife and children were not. I can say honestly that the last thing I wanted to do when writing that book was upset them and I’m sorry that they have been upset by the book.

And how did he feel when he heard Clough had died?

“It was strange because I’d been writing about him for about 18 months by that point, but I didn’t know the man personally. I had the opportunity to meet him and I’d decided against it because I thought that would have stopped it being a novel.

“I would have really liked to have met him, but I think that if you meet someone when you’re writing about them, in the kind of books I write where it is a novel and you’re trying to create a character that I’m not saying is the real person, I think that would change. It would stop being a novel if you actually met the person.”

Whilst Peace – who lived in Japan from 1991 until earlier this year – is unequivocal about his admiration for the Red Riding films, he is unable to offer any judgement about the other major adaptation of one of his novels – The Damned United – although he insists this is because he says an unfortunate series of incidents have meant he is yet to see the film for himself.

“In fairness, they sent me a rough cut DVD, but it wouldn’t play on my DVD player! And they did invite me to the set so when I’m saying I’ve not seen it, it’s not a case of me being a churlish author.

“People tell me it’s very different. Some people prefer it. Like my sister, for example!”

All Peace’s novels to date have been written in Tokyo, where he moved to work as an English teacher, and where he met his Japanese wife. His last two books – Tokyo Year Zero and Occupied City – form part of an as yet incomplete trilogy and are the first not to be set in Yorkshire.

True to form, however, they are based on real events, feature murder and political intrigue during the US occupation of Japan in the aftermath of Word War II. Is it a point of principle for him to write about real events rather than concocting a situation?

“It has become one yeah,” he says. “I think one of the reasons I don’t like Nineteen Seventy-Four is because I made it up. I envy people who can create these other worlds, and I can understand why people want to read them but, personally, I have such a hard time understanding daily life and who we are, where we are, and where we’ve come from that’s been a motivation to write the books I’ve written, I suppose.

Peace has publically stated his intention to stop writing novels after his twelfth book, and has joked about trying to find a publisher for his “very bad poetry”.

Peace’s work has a concise and poetic quality, which hints that his poetry might not be as bad as he thinks. He says the original manuscripts of his books look like poems and he reads them aloud, as you would a poem, to check for the correct feel and pace of the text.

As well as being one of the most successful and highly rated authors around at the moment, Peace is also one of the most methodical and the superstitions he employs when writing are well known.

“I have a superstition that when I finish a book, I try to finish it on a day when it numerologically adds up to nine,” he explains. “I try to get a word total as well that’s divisible by nine.

“I mean, it’s not a theory or a religion or anything like that, it’s just my own kind of things. It’s just for me. Basically, it just shows a complete lack of confidence!”

Even at this stage? After the work has received an echo?

“Increasingly.”

Even the power of numbers to bring Peace luck that his undoubted natural talent and ability to tap into the human psyche surely render unnecessary is not enough to persuade him to extend his career beyond another four books.

“If I get to 12, I will stop at 12! It sounds like something Gary Numan would say or something – talk about regretting something you’ve said. But 12 is a load of books and now I’m writing the third of the Tokyo books, which is my ninth overall, and is a challenge enough.

“I know what books 10 and 11 will be. I do not know what book 12 will be, but the reason I want to stick to this...firstly, I think genuinely you can outstay your welcome and secondly, I wouldn’t want to be in a position where it would be like a job and I’d be thinking things like “this is my pension” or “I’ll get it right in the next book” or any of that rubbish.

“I want to be like “this is it” and, as I say, I’m not sure I’ll even get as far as 12, but I want every book to matter.”

AS A TEENAGER GROWING UP IN A COUNTY GRIPPED BY FEAR AS ONE OF BRITAIN’S MOST NOTORIOUS SERIAL KILLERS REMAINED AT LARGE, PEACE WAS ABLE TO GAUGE FIRST HAND THE MOOD OF THE TIME. BY GEOGRAPHICAL FLUKE, HE ALSO ENDED UP BEING PART OF THE MOB THAT GREETED SUTCLIFFE AHEAD OF HIS FIRST COURT APPEARANCE.
Exposing the risks of exposure
Our relationship with the sun is hugely complicated. We need certain amounts of it to stay healthy and we generally associate its presence with a degree of happiness – sunny weather forecast = widespread cheeriness; cloudy, rainy weather forecast = grumbling all round. But the same sun we seek so eagerly is also capable of inflicting serious damage – sunshine and the ultraviolet light it carries is the direct cause of skin cancer. Why do we chase something which is ultimately harmful?

“It is a pity that sunburn is delayed several hours because people are overdoing the damage without realising it,” said Professor Ferguson. “If they could feel the burn as it was happening, then we would undoubtedly have far fewer people suffering severe damage.”

As it is, the problem continues to increase. “There is an epidemic in skin cancer and it is increasing steadily,” said Professor Ferguson. “Ultraviolet light is carcinogenic – there is no doubt about that – and people should be careful. And simply being careful and sensible would bring about a positive change – it is estimated that 80 per cent of skin cancers are preventable. Yet we have seen the number of melanomas double in the past eight years.”

Professor Ferguson is Head of the Photobiology Unit in the University’s School of Medicine, which is also the National Photobiology Unit. Together, he and his Physicist colleague Professor Harry Moseley see first hand the nature and the scale of the problem Scotland is facing in terms of skin cancer.

They have conducted research on the effects of exposure to ultraviolet light, both in terms of the damage it causes and how it can be manipulated for use in phototherapeutic treatments.

The Unit covers all manner of photosensitive diseases and conditions, but of prime concern is skin cancer, the continuing rise in cases, and the causes behind that. They are keen to reinforce to people the dangers of over-exposure to the sun and ultraviolet light.

“Unfortunately, we are just not adapted, as northern Europeans, to high levels of exposure to sunlight. All the skin blemishes we see show us that, yet still we are exposing ourselves to it with many people not fully aware of the dangers it presents,” said Professor Moseley.
To see just how ill-equipped we are to deal with high levels of exposure we need only look to Australia, a nation infamously established through the large-scale import of British convicts, all very pale-skinned and landing in a country where the sun shines bright and long. Fast forward a couple of hundred years and we have a country where the skin cancer timebomb has long been recognised – it has been referred to as ‘Australia’s Curse’. The country has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world and more than 50 per cent of Australians will suffer a skin cancer at some time in their lives. Around one in seven will suffer a melanoma.

“What has happened in Australia undoubtedly stands as a warning to us all, particularly in relation to protecting children from exposure to high levels of ultraviolet light,” said Professor Moseley. “What the long term data from Australia shows is that the first fifteen years are critical in terms of protection from UV damage. People who had grown up in Australia were far more likely to develop skin cancer than those who had emigrated there at a later age. So protecting children from UV damage is absolutely crucial.”

A particularly key phrase in the Scottish context is ‘damage from ultraviolet light’. As well as being present in natural sunlight, UV light is what makes sunbeds work. And sunbeds are a particular problem for Scotland. Perhaps due to our relative lack of sunshine, or at least sunshine warm enough to dispel the chill that makes it too cold to don shorts or bikinis for most of the year, Scots are significantly more likely to use sunbeds than people in, say, the south of England - rates of use in Scotland are twice as high.

“The use of sunbeds is another major part of the whole problem we are seeing,” said Professor Moseley. “The ultraviolet power of sunlamps has increased by a factor of three in a relatively short period, and the high-powered lamps are pretty much standard now, so people are routinely exposing themselves to a high, and potentially very damaging, level of ultraviolet light. That is giving a cancer risk comparable minute-for-minute to exposure to a strong Mediterranean sun. And we know that exposure to the sun is the cause of skin cancer.

“There is a section of the population who are very keen users of sunbeds, a lot of them young women but not exclusively so. And in a lot of cases they either aren’t aware of the dangers of exposing themselves to high levels of ultraviolet light, or they simply aren’t taking on the message. That is worrying.”

Both Professor Ferguson and Professor Moseley have contributed to the Scottish Government’s efforts to try and limit access and exposure to sunbeds and to reinforce the warning messages. They are happy to see action being taken but would prefer to have seen the Government introduce stronger legislation.

“The Scottish Parliament is effectively going to ban unsupervised use of sunbeds among under-18s and they are going to insist that warnings of the dangers of sunbed use are clearly displayed,” said Professor Ferguson.

“Having the warnings out there is an advance but we would have liked to see them go further and introduce a system of licensing, much like tattoo parlours have to operate under.

Getting the message across regarding sun protection and the risks of skin cancer is an immensely hard task. The hurdles include an entire culture where the sun is seen as a good thing, fashion and media industries which have promoted the image of a tan as being healthy, and the age-old belief that ‘it will never happen to me’. There has also been a relatively tiny budget made available to advertise the sort of problems that Professors Ferguson and Moseley are highlighting.

“One of the problems with getting people to take on the advice is that there is a significant time lag in when skin cancers occur,” said Professor Ferguson. “Damage is most likely to occur in childhood but most skin cancers occur in older people. That makes it much harder to convince people of the dangers but skin cancer is not just an old person’s disease. Seeing young people with melanomas is a far more common sight in our clinics now than it ever was in the past.

“But telling a 17-year-old they might be in danger of having serious problems when they are 50 tends to have a limited effect. The attitude of so many at that age is that they are either invincible and that it isn’t going to happen to them, or that they’ll be old or dead by then anyway!”

The tides of fashion and the media – particularly in areas aimed at younger people - have long helped reinforce the notion that having a tan is desirable.
For years, movie idols, pop stars and fashion models have sported brown skin almost as a matter of course. The effect that has had on successive generations has been marked. The 20th century saw a complete turnaround in attitudes towards suntans.

“The position now is the complete opposite of what it was if you look back at Victorian times, where having a tan was deemed to be very unfashionable and pale skin was very much revered,” said Professor Ferguson. “If you showed a tan, it meant you probably worked outside, which meant you were likely from a lower social class. Pale skin and long fingernails were a sign that you probably didn’t have to work outside or do manual labour, so that was what people aspired to. The Victorians knew far less about the damage the sun could do, but for reasons of fashion a lot of them protected themselves against it far better than people do now.”

Of course fashion and, to a certain degree, comfort have long since consigned to history the image of gentlemen stepping out in hats and frock coats on a hot summer’s day, while the ladies carried a parasol for shade.

“Fashion has played a significant role in this turnaround,” said Professor Moseley. “Coco Chanel is apparently to blame for the whole cult of the tan. She was reported to have said that no one could be beautiful if they didn’t have a sun tan, and of course she had tremendous clout in the fashion world so people followed on from that.

“Nowadays we see so many people who appear in the media and have a tan, and that again helps to promote the message that this is something which is desirable. There are a few who are promoting pale skin, but the greater number still have a tan. That inevitably has an effect, especially on top of decades where it has been accepted as the norm. But we have to try and change that, at least to some extent, just to get people to fully understand what they are doing, the risks and the consequences.”

Now efforts are being made to turn the tide of fashion back on itself, in part by concentrating on the cosmetic effects of skin damage caused by exposure to sunlight and UV light.

“To try and engage with certain sections of the community the message is changing and increasingly we are using aspects of fashion to get the message across,” said Professor Moseley. “CR-UK are now putting stuff out there based on the more cosmetic aspects of sun exposure, for example that it will give you wrinkles. That is a potentially devastating message to young women in particular who are very keen to avoid wrinkles!”

Overall both Professors see progress, but would dearly like to see a lot more. For one thing, the more we do to protect ourselves, the less cases of skin cancer there will be. And that means less deaths.

“Things are moving in the right direction in terms of better education and better legislation,” said Professor Ferguson. “But there still needs to be better public awareness of the risks, and we need to see those skin cancer numbers starting to come down.

“We’re not killjoys, we’re not saying people should not enjoy the sunshine or get on with their lives in a normal fashion, but they should be able to take simple steps to avoid unnecessary, and sometimes serious, illness.”
Yet at the same time concerns over how much children are reading and what they are reading appear to be as hotly debated as ever. A current internet search shows multiple hits ranging from news that the numbers of children reaching the Government’s reading and writing standards is falling to numerous campaign launches to ‘Get Children Reading’.

It is a debate that Professor Keith Topping is well used to seeing raised. After all, as he points out, it is hardly new and it never seems to go away.

“You can find complaints being made in ancient Greece that are still being echoed today about children not reading enough,” said Professor Topping, Chair of Educational and Social Research in the School of Education, Social Work and Community Education at Dundee.

“There are frequent surveys that come out reporting that children of both sexes are not reading enough. But there are still an awful lot of books being read, so the surveys sometimes have to be taken with a pinch of salt.

“That said, there are a lot of issues here that do bear looking at to see what we can do, because they do reveal very significant differences between boys and girls, how children behave as they get older, in terms of their reading habits, and also about the role parents play in encouraging reading.”

Professor Topping has been involved in some of the biggest research studies looking at mass reading patterns and behaviour of children, both in the UK and internationally. He has also conducted pioneering studies on peer learning and how children can help teach each other to improve their reading skills.

“There are key questions we have to ask in terms of children and their reading and the three big questions are:
1. do they read?
2. what do they read?
3. do they understand it?

“There is a significant difference between reading and understanding. We see very young kids reading Harry Potter, but we have to ask if they actually understand all of it. The ideal level for challenging the reader is to have the ‘difficulty’ of the book just above their current level, so that there may be some words or detail that they may have to think about or try and find out more about. That is how we keep on learning.
“We tend to be quite good at doing that during their primary school years when kids will try to challenge themselves and reading is seen very much as learning to read. But they get to secondary school and they no longer set themselves the same kinds of challenges. They regard themselves as ‘readers’ and as they get older they will tend to read books in their free time that are comparatively easier for them. They are seeing sentence structures, words and phrases that aren’t challenging for them.

“The key with adolescent readers is to get them to accept that reading is a skill which continues to develop. If you keep reading books which demand a lot of you, then you will continue to get better at it.”

The pattern of high interest in learning to read at an early stage which then fades away is largely replicated in the levels of interest shown by parents, says Professor Topping. Again he has conducted wide-ranging research into the role parents can play in education.

“Parents inevitably do have an important role to play, right across their children’s education and particularly in helping develop their reading skills.

“What we tend to find is that parents are very aware of their child’s reading ability when they are in the early stages of primary school. They pay less attention to it by the time the child is in the later stages of primary school, and by the time they are in secondary school they aren’t really paying any attention to it at all. Playing into that is the tendency among parents to believe that secondary school homework is too detailed for them to be able to help. But I think they can still offer some kind of help and advice. The nature of parental involvement is very important. Of course what parents can think of as support, children often see as interference, but that is not to say parents shouldn’t still try to offer it.

“Again what we see is that ‘learning to read’ is regarded as something you do early on and then move on from. But we are always learning to read and potentially getting better at it.”

There is a clear difference between genders in how they develop and use their reading skills. The differences between what and how boys and girls read becomes evident at an early stage and can continue right through childhood and into adulthood. They read different kinds of books and other material, approach it differently and relate to books in a different way, said Professor Topping.

“There are significant differences between boys and girls. Boys will tend to read different kinds of media. They are not so fond of fiction; they tend to go for non-fiction and in areas that are very specific. In truth, that can be as demanding in terms of the reading challenge it presents. The problem that arises is that these kinds of reading challenges that boys are engaging with don’t sit comfortably with the primary school teacher passing out books that tell a story.

“This does cause some issues for boys of lower ability, who aren’t reading enough when they are young and can’t read well by the time they leave primary school and consequently can’t then improve when they get to secondary. We see this in the bottom academic quartile of boys, who can’t make the leap.

“But if you look at the pattern of allocation of senior professional posts across the world, the majority are still occupied by men, so a lot of them are certainly reading and doing reasonably well at it! Later in life boys get the urge to read what they have to read to get on with their working life. It appears that boys read more for specific purposes, whereas girls read more for pleasure.”

How much children read and write out of school is another area where the gender gap appears – “Leisure-time reading is tending to slowly reduce as years go by, depending on how it is measured, and that seems to hold true more for boys than girls,” said Professor Topping.
But this is an area that is a battleground for kids’ attention and one that is getting more crowded all the time.

“I don’t think you can be surprised that children might not be reading a lot. I think we have to recognise that it is a significantly more fragmented culture than their parents would have experienced at that age.

“Just take a look at their bedrooms. A child’s bedroom now will likely be the most technologically advanced room in the house. If they have a computer, games console, television, DVD player and whatever else - and I wouldn’t think that is at all unusual – then that is a lot of things competing for their attention.”

For an entire generation and more it was television that was portrayed as the enemy, stealing children away from a life devouring the written classics. But the ‘idiot box’ has been largely rehabilitated in terms of the effect it has on children’s reading habits.

“There is considerable evidence that kids who watch a lot of television actually also tend to read a lot,” said Professor Topping. “It is more the case now that the ones who aren’t reading so much are the ones who are playing a lot of video games – which can swallow up a significant amount of time - or using social networking sites a lot.

“Children might think that because they are actually writing and reading a lot of text when they are using some of these networking sites – and they are – that they are meeting some kind of quota of reading and writing. But they are not doing it where it counts. There is a great dislocation between the kind of challenging explanatory prose that is required in school and the very fragmentary writing that is the norm on social networking sites. And it is the gap between these that tends to cause alarm among teachers, who see the difficulty some children have in recognising the difference and adapting to it.

“The fact of the matter is that it is the school-type writing that leads to jobs where the money is, so it is important that children do learn it and pick it up.”

That is not likely to change any time soon. Our digital culture continues to expand and as it does so it has already brought significant changes in communication through text messaging and social networking, areas where text is manipulated into abbreviated forms, slang terms and spellings which can include any character from the keyboard and not just letters. But that does not translate into the academic or professional world, where a certain level of clear communication is expected.

Basic reading and writing skills are certain to remain an essential part of everyday life for the foreseeable future. Learning them at an early stage will continue to be crucial. And with so much to distract our children from the task at hand, the concerns over how many of them are managing to meet that challenge will no doubt rumble on. After all, little has changed on that front since the ancient Greeks started to worry.

But we now have a more detailed understanding of why children read, what they read, and what they take from it. That understanding can only help in encouraging more of them to read, and keep on reading.
Wendy Houvenaghel

Wendy Houvenaghel is an Olympic silver medallist and World Championship gold medallist cyclist. She graduated from the University in 1998 with a Dentistry degree, and returned to Dundee in June 2009 to receive an honorary degree for her sporting achievements.

Wendy Houvanaghel has her eyes fixed firmly on the prize that awaits in London in 2012. Having tasted the special atmosphere created at the last Olympic Games in Beijing, where she took the silver medal in the Women’s Individual Pursuit, she is focussed on going one better in London.

“2012 is what I have my eye on now – the dream is to win the gold medal in the Individual Pursuit in London. Everything I do until then is going to be a stepping stone towards the London Olympics,” said Wendy.

It was that kind of long-term planning that took her to the podium in Beijing, albeit from unlikely beginnings. Wendy had no cycling experience when she took up the sport in 2002 as a change from running, but it soon became clear she had a talent for it – a matter of months after first getting on her bike she finished fourth in her first national competition.

That ultimately set her on the path to world and Olympic finals and a haul of medals, but it wasn’t a journey that came without significant challenges.

“It was a bit of a risk I took from the start, entering into a programme for two years targeted specifically at getting on the podium at the Olympics,” said Wendy. “That was a big ask for someone who hasn’t got a great background in cycling. But I got going quite quickly and developed fast.”

The Olympic effect has given cycling in this country a tremendous boost. Team GB had been achieving at a high level well before Beijing but the success there has taken things to an entirely different level.

“People pay great attention to the Olympics so the fact we did so well and won so many medals had a tremendous impact. It has been great for the sport in general, particularly in the way it has helped encourage kids to get on bikes. I think the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014 can only have a similar effect – the Manchester Games showed that if you provide a state-of-the-art facility it will have a considerable impact, especially combined with a winning team.”

Her dedication to cycling has meant Wendy has had to give up her career in dentistry, at least for the moment. After graduating in 1998 she went to work as a dentist in the Royal Air Force. But the start of intense preparations for the Beijing Olympics meant maintaining a career alongside cycling was impossible.

“I could see myself returning to dentistry at some point,” she says now. “In a lot of ways it was a shame I had to give up my job because I really enjoyed what I was doing and liked working alongside the people in the practice I was in. But Olympic Games can change your life to some extent and I don’t think I’ll be doing anything else until I have fulfilled my potential in cycling.”

Part of that life-changing experience was the honour bestowed on her by the University at Graduation in 2009, more than a decade after she first crossed the stage to receive her dentistry degree.

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“It is eleven years since I graduated and it was such an honour to go back to Dundee and be recognised like that for what I have done,” said Wendy. “Getting an honorary degree wasn’t the sort of thing I had ever contemplated happening but I couldn’t have been more delighted to be given it. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole event, it was superb.”

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James McIntosh

James McIntosh has been dubbed the UK’s leading Home Economist, and this year has won two major international awards for his cookery writing. In 2000 James completed an MA in Food and Welfare Studies at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design.

“The degree in Food and Welfare Studies – which essentially was a Home Economics and Consumer Studies degree – set me up for my career,” says James.

“As soon as I graduated I moved to London. First of all I worked for a year developing ready meals for Asda and hated it! I am not meant to be based in a factory! After that I moved to Le Cordon Bleu Cookery Schools where I wrote cookery books and student programmes for 22 Le Cordon Bleu cookery schools around the world. I then moved to the Good Housekeeping Institute where I tested domestic products – anything from kitchen products like microwaves, food processors and dishwashers; washing machines to vacuum cleaners – all to British Standards.”

In 2004 he set up his own business, Whisk (www.whisk.biz). “We do things like cookery and appliance demonstrations for the likes of Aga and Rayburn, Le Creuset, Tefal and every brand in the kitchen you can think of, as well as food styling for photo shoots, and developing and testing out recipes that come with products.”

In 2008 James launched his own website, www.jamesmcintosh.co.uk. “It’s weird talking about yourself as a brand – we sit in meetings and talk about the ‘JM brand’, and I want to say ‘Hey, it’s me over here! I’m a person!’”

So far James McIntosh – the person, not the brand – has written four books, in a pocket-sized series at wallet-friendly prices intended to cover the basics in simple family-friendly food. The first book in the series, simply entitled mix, won him the prestigious Gourmand Award for the Best UK Cookbook. He also won the Gourmand Best in the World Cookbook Series for the set of four titles, which also include dinner, veg and cake.

The books fit with his ethos; “no fiddle, no fuss, just food”. They may include 540 recipes, but James is not a chef, he is a Home Economist, and it’s an important distinction: “A chef deals with a restaurant, with preparing recipes, and no matter how simple or complex, it’s just catering. To become a chef you need an NVQ, to become a Home Economist you need a degree. We understand the full picture – not just about cooking but about nutrition, budgeting, special diets. To call a Home Economist a chef would be like calling an engineer a mechanic!”

James’ books are available at £4.99 each (plus postage and packing) from his website www.jamesmcintosh.co.uk

Lida Skifte Lennert

In 2001 Lida Skifte Lennert completed a Masters in international oil and gas law at The Centre for Energy, Petroleum and Mineral Law and Policy (CEPMLP) at the University of Dundee. She is now Minister Counsellor at Greenland Representation in Brussels, Belgium.

“I first heard about Dundee and CEPMLP when I studied for my Masters in Petroleum Law at the University of Oslo. On graduating from Oslo I was headhunted to become a legal adviser in the newly established Bureau of Minerals and Petroleum in Greenland, a hydrocarbon frontier area in the far North.

During my first two years as a legal adviser, I attended a week-long negotiation seminar at CEPMLP and immediately wanted to apply for the oil and gas programme, and enrolled as a Masters student the following year. My dissertation focused on the environmental aspects of oil and gas, and regulation in Greenland in particular. My dissertation recommendations on health, safety and the environment in the oil exploration phase were later implemented in Greenland.

“I am currently based in Brussels, Belgium, as Head of the Greenland Representation working on issues relating to Greenland’s agreements with the European Union. Although I do not specifically deal with oil and gas issues in my daily tasks I believe that the international environment at CEPMLP has helped me in many ways. In my job as Greenland’s Representative in the EU I deal with many different nationalities where diplomacy is a key tool in reaching our common goals.

“Due to my professional oil and gas law background I have been appointed as a member of the Board of Directors in the National Oil Company in Greenland, where I deal with licences, and I also work closely with Greenland’s oil sector in relation to the European Union’s Arctic Policy.

“As well as the excellent oil and gas programme at CEPMLP, I gained something else valuable in Dundee – friends from many different regions of the world. I have been lucky enough to visit my ‘Dundee friends’ in their own countries; a most memorable tour in Rio de Janeiro with my Brazilian friend Rogerio and his family; attending a wedding of my Venezuelan roommate Johana who married another CEPMLP classmate Andreas, a German; and last year, Geraldine from Ireland visited me in Greenland. Not to forget my friend “Inkaman” Andrés from Peru – I am his Eskimo friend. Professionally and socially CEPMLP has been a boost to my CV and to my international career and friendships.”
Francis Boag

Francis Boag is a former Principal Teacher of Art who over the past decade has become one of Scotland’s most popular contemporary artists. Francis graduated from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in 1969 and now lives near Stonehaven in Kincardineshire.

“I started at the College in 1965, and I was definitely a year too young,” admits Boag. “My seventeenth birthday was two days before I started College, and I looked about 14. My classmates who were 18 or 19 seemed so much more mature; they drove cars, had jobs...When they went to the pub I had to go back home.” He still remembers well the long walk up Balgay Hill from College to his parents’ home in Lochee. “At the end of my first year there was money left from my grant – I had nothing to spend it on!”

From his second year onwards Francis got into his stride, and as well as developing his painting techniques by his final year he was Entertainments Convener for the Students’ Union. “My main claim to fame is that I booked Pink Floyd for the Christmas Revels in 1968! They suited us art students right down to the ground – there were 20 minute guitar solos which we could shamble about to our hearts content... It was an exciting time!”

In 1989 Francis moved to the Mearns, an area stretching from Fettercairn to north of Stonehaven in the North East of Scotland. Inspired by its topography and architecture, he began to paint landscapes seriously for the first time, having previously largely been a figurative painter.

What is now the very distinctive ‘Boag’ style is a result of his consistent choice of subject matter – the fields, groups of cottages and trees of the Mearns – combined with his use of texture and vibrant colour, built up through repeated applications of acrylic paint.

“People ask me how they can be successful and sell their work, but I have no idea. If you put your work in a gallery people will either like it or they will not... It’s intangible.”

At age 50 Francis took the brave step of leaving his post as Principal Teacher of Art at Aberdeen Grammar School to study for an MA. This ‘sabbatical’ year persuaded him that a new career was possible and after nearly 30 years he finally left teaching in 2001, and became an artist full time. Since then, Francis has worked steadily to establish himself as one of the leading figures in a new generation of “Scottish Colourists”.

He now paints around 200 paintings a year of all sizes. Last year to mark his 60th birthday, the Fraser Gallery in St Andrews held a hugely successful retrospective of his work, where his largest painting sold for £9,000. His paintings are bought by private and public collectors and he is one of the few artists to have work held in the National collections of both Scotland and Eire, and his work in shown around the world. Every year he donates a painting to UNICEF for their Christmas cards.

This year sees another development in Francis’s career, with the publication of a book, The Mearns Distilled, a collection of his vibrant paintings, coupled with atmospheric photographs from leading Scottish photographer Andy Hall, all celebrating the beauty and diversity of the distinctive Mearns landscape.

Forty years on from the vibrant atmosphere of Art College at Dundee in the late 60s, it would seem that Francis Boag, artist, is still doing what he always wanted to do – paint!

Francis Boag’s work can be seen at www.francisboag.com

Keith Brown

Keith Brown MSP studied Political Science and Social Policy at Dundee, graduating in 1988, and is now Minister for Schools and Skills in the Scottish Parliament.

“Dundee was my first choice for University - the course looked the best with its mix of Economics, English and German, and it gave me a good grounding in political theory and doctrines and an understanding of political philosophy which has served me well in my work,” says Keith.

Keith arrived here in 1984, previously having served in the Falklands War as a Marine. He joined the SNP on his first day as a student: “At the Freshers’ Fayre I looked at all the political parties and decided the SNP was the one for me. I joined there and then.

“Most of my formative political experiences were gained while studying at Dundee,” says Keith.
Malcolm Buick

Malcolm Buick graduated in graphic design from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design in 1995. He now works for world leading brand consultancy Wolff Olins in New York, as Design Director.

“I was brought up in Arbroath and we used to go on trips from school to the Art College; to me it seemed a really creative, energetic hub with all these amazing things going on, and I wanted to go there.

“There was a real sense of craft coming out of DOJ and it got great write ups. When I became a student, the lecturers weren’t all from an art school background – some of them came from traditional printing; they had an awareness of typography and an attention to detail which has really helped me in my work since. Lecturers such as David Herbert for example, encouraged me to crossover into other areas; although I was studying graphic design I spent hours in the dark room experimenting in photography.”

Work in London and then travels in America eventually led him to Wolff Olins. The world renowned agency has been responsible for famous brands such as Apple Records in the Sixties, Orange and Tate in the Nineties and Macmillan Cancer Support and London 2012 in the Noughties.

In January 2009 Malcolm’s association with DOJ was reignited when lecturer Phillip Vaughan, who studied at DOJ with him, brought current third-year students on a trip to New York to see the design agencies there. Together Malcolm and Phillip wrote a brief for a challenging student project, which would recreate the realities of working with clients, often geographically removed from the agency.

“It really taxed the students to think about the whole branding exercise, writing about the concepts and being able to tell a succinct story. A lot of my time is spent writing, explaining a concept to a client, so this reflects the reality of what it’s like working in an agency.”

The three project winners, Nicole Calder, Sian Leong and Alison Mehta, are featured in the news section of the Wolff Olins website, with a link to their quirky television adverts featuring animated animals and insects made out of brightly coloured paper. The ads were created for their brand EIEIO, a fictional indoor farming supermarket that invites customers to dig their own potatoes, catch their own fish and milk their own cows, and are well worth a look (see: http://www.wolffolins.com/news/)

Malcolm enjoys working in New York but says he would ultimately like one day to return home. “I would love to come back to live in Dundee, even to work at DOJ – that would be fantastic. There are some great designers in Scotland – it used to play second fiddle to London, but that is no longer the case. Scotland is holding its own.”

“In my first year I had my very first experience of campaigning, canvassing door to door in a by-election, and I was always active in the University of Dundee Nationalists’ Association – I served as both Treasurer and Chair.”

Dundee also gave Keith another opportunity – he spent his second year at the University of Prince Edward Island in Canada as part of a student exchange programme.

“I had a great year there, it was fantastic. There was a selection process and you weren’t allowed to go if you had any resits, so it was a real incentive to pass all my exams! Prince Edward Island is the smallest province in Canada, and it only has one University, so it was quite a different experience from Dundee.”

In 1988, after graduating, Keith fought his first council election. He was not successful, but went on to work in local government in Edinburgh and Stirling, followed by 11 years as a councillor in Clackmannanshire. He was elected to the Scottish Parliament in 2007, and after two years on the backbench is now a member of Cabinet, as Minister for Schools and Skills.

Keith was back in Dundee recently with his eldest daughter, a prospective student. “When we came to visit the University we were given a proper tour, the opportunity to meet the lecturers and look around. The only thing I didn’t like was when we went to the Bonar Hall – it brought back too many memories of sitting exams there!”
Dundee Contemporary Arts has become such a cornerstone of the city’s cultural life that it is hard to imagine Dundee without it. However, it is a mere decade since DCA opened its doors on the site of a former car garage, heralding a major milestone in the cultural reinvention and economic regeneration of Dundee as it did so.

Featuring exhibitions from world-renowned and emerging artists, showing an eclectic mix of world, art house, independent and mainstream cinema, and providing wide-ranging community education programmes (not to mention one of the city’s most popular eateries/nightspots), DCA has plugged a gap in Dundee’s cultural landscape and provided a facility that the city had been crying out for.

The decade-long success story has been made possible in no small part by close collaboration with Duncan and Jordanstone College of Art and Design – one of the main drivers in establishing the vibrant, forward-thinking, world-class contemporary arts centre. The relationship between the two organisations is most obviously represented by the fact DCA is home to the Visual Research Centre, a unique facility dedicated to arts research which is part of Duncan of Jordanstone.

And then there was The Associates, the exhibition chosen to mark the DCA’s 10th anniversary which drew upon the best artistic talent to have emerged from the Dundee area over the past decade – all 17 featured artists were Duncan of Jordanstone alumni.

The establishment of DCA has helped Dundee move towards a critical mass of creative industries, and enhanced its reputation as an emerging cultural centre in the post-industrial world. In turn, the presence of one of the UK’s top-rated art schools has enabled DCA to get a foothold in the city.

This amounts to “wonderful synergy” according to Murdo Macdonald, Professor of History of Scottish Art at Duncan of Jordanstone, and closely associated with the VRC.

“In general terms, DCA is a wonderful resource for the city of Dundee, and a wonderful complement to the work of the University,” he said. “The presence of DCA so close to Duncan of Jordanstone has been good for both, and there is a wonderful synergy between the two. The presence of an excellent art school makes it possible for DCA to build upon the consistently high reputation that Duncan of Jordanstone has always enjoyed.

The 2009 RAE underlined Duncan of Jordanstone’s position as the pre-eminent art school in Scotland, and placed it as one of the best schools in the UK.

“From my point of view, the existence of the Visual Research Centre has enhanced the grant-application process, and to have an area devoted to visual research is an enormous advantage to any art school,” continued Professor Macdonald. “It has helped Duncan of Jordanstone to develop its research profile and its PhD profile as few other initiatives could.”

The late Donald Dewar, then Secretary of State for Scotland, officially declared DCA open on March 19, 1999, saying as he did so that DCA would boost the city’s economy and provide a cultural centre for the area. He has most certainly been proved correct, and the £9 million centre, designed by award-winning architect Richard Murphy, has become a much-cherished part of the national cultural landscape.

The establishment of DCA provides an outlet for the vast array of creative talent that exists within Dundee, much of it nurtured by Duncan of Jordanstone, and other parts of the University of Dundee. It is the cornerstone of the City Council’s ‘cultural quarter’ strategy, but it would be wrong to think of DCA being an institution exclusive to Dundee.

Dundee Contemporary Arts is a world-class centre for the development and exhibition of contemporary art and culture. It has established itself as one of Scotland’s top art centres with thought-provoking exhibitions from internationally renowned artists that consistently challenge the boundaries of contemporary art.

Over the past 10 years, eight artists who exhibited in DCA galleries have been subsequently nominated for the Turner Prize. Its two-screen cinema brings films to Dundee that would otherwise slip under its radar.
More than 19,000 children from Tayside have experienced global cinema for the first time at the Discovery Film Festival. Print works created at DCA have been bought by the UK’s leading art institutions including the Tate Gallery and the Victoria & Albert Museum.

In an economic impact study of 2003, DCA was credited for creating 258 jobs and generating over £4m for the region’s economy. Its reputation and the consistently high standard of exhibitions continue to attract visitors from both within, and far beyond the city’s boundaries – annual attendance figures are around 300,000.

It represents bold civic cultural ambition and, in recognition of its 10th anniversary and growing international reputation, DCA was chosen to curate the Scottish Pavilion at this year’s Venice Biennale.

The Associates, which premiered 10 years to the day that DCA opened, took its name from the seminal 1980s pop group fronted by Dundee-born Billy MacKenzie. The survey exhibition charted some of the most talented artists to emerge from Dundee since the late 1990s. All of the artists trained at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design and have gone on to national and international acclaim.

DCA is both regeneration-leading and a regeneration-led cultural development, and has proved a success in artistic, economic and social terms. Director Clive Gillman said it was good for everyone involved in DCA to reflect on 10 years of success, but there was no danger of the centre resting on its laurels.

He said, “As an organisation which thrives on the cutting edge of contemporary culture, we are constantly looking forward. DCA was conceived as a joint project between the City Council and the University, who identified that such an ambitious undertaking reflected the level of aspiration and ability within Duncan of Jordanstone.

“The presence of DCA so close to Duncan of Jordanstone has been good for both, and there is a wonderful synergy between the two. The presence of an excellent art school makes it possible for DCA to build upon the consistently high reputation that Duncan of Jordanstone has always enjoyed.

“It was also recognised that it was essential to have something within the city working at the same kind of level as the art school and was capable of contributing something quite significant at an international level. We work well together, and the ecology of practice is something that has evolved significantly over the years.

“It is significant that this year, we curated The Associates exhibition showcasing 17 artists who were either born in Dundee, or who have close links with the city by studying or developing their talent here. We didn’t set out to exclusively feature Duncan of Jordanstone graduates, but when we finalised the line up we found that they all were, which was a nice surprise.

“The past 10 years have been an exciting time for both DCA and Duncan of Jordanstone, but what is even more exciting is when we start thinking about how we can move forward over the next decade and beyond.”
With rising numbers of students entering higher education, there has been an acceptance that preparing them for the world of work is essential to help graduates set themselves apart from the competition and prove their worth to employers.

This has come even more sharply into focus since the beginning of the global economic downturn – with more and more applicants for each graduate-level job – but the University of Dundee’s work to improve employability predates the recession.

A graduate internship scheme pioneered by the University was identified in a national report as an exemplar of the pivotal role that higher education institutions can play in moving the UK from recession to recovery.

The University of Dundee Careers Service earlier this year became the first in the UK to offer graduates an internship certificate which will allow them greater access to industry after the end of their studies and boost their CVs.

The Scottish Internship Graduate Certificate (SIGC) is a postgraduate certificate consisting of three credit-bearing Modules and offers a six month placement with a high profile employer within Scotland.

Through the programme students can enhance their employment prospects in the UK and abroad by gaining valuable hands-on experience within a Scottish business whilst developing a real insight into the UK business climate and culture.

The Universities UK report - From Recession to Recovery – highlights some of the practical steps being taken by universities to prepare graduates, students and businesses for the current challenges they face.

Dundee’s inclusion in the report is recognition of the positive strides being made to move employability ever more to the front of people’s minds, and embed it within the University curriculum, according to Graham Nicholson, Director of the Careers Service at the University.

Ready to work

A student’s university education is not just about mastery of their chosen subject – there has been a growing recognition of the fact that enhancing the employability of graduates has become every bit as important for institutions in recent years.
He explained, “We launched this to give our students a real advantage in terms of being noticed by Scottish/UK graduate employers. We are ahead of the game in this and the interest in the certificate has been excellent.”

The SIGC is just one of several initiatives to improve employability that have been deployed by the University in recent years.

The annual Academic Professional Development conference, *Today’s Students: Tomorrow’s Graduates* focuses on employability, and this year’s event saw the launch of the Dundee Graduate Skills Award.

The Award aims to enhance the employability of graduates by providing employers with more information about the qualities they possess.

Students who register for the Award will, on graduation, receive a certificate detailing the experience, skills and attributes that they have acquired through extra-curricular activities in addition to their academic achievements during their period of undergraduate study.

It will build on career development programmes already available at the University, and raise awareness of the importance of employability. The Award has already been accredited by several employer and business associations.

University Vice Principal Professor Christopher Whatley, who is Chair of the Employability Working Group, said, “The University is proud of the achievements of our graduates and believes they are well-prepared for the challenges they face after graduation.”

“At this time of economic difficulty we recognise that the search for graduate level employment is going to be extremely competitive, but even in better times we are keen to ensure that our graduates have the best possible platform from which to enter the world of work.

“We will help make students more conscious of the skills, attributes and knowledge they pick up, the ways in which they can pick them up, and how they add to their employability.”

Particular focus will be placed on the encouragement of enterprise, extra-curricular activities, volunteering and student politics by showing how participation has helped the students develop leadership, responsibility, self-confidence, effective communication, and ability to work in a team.

“We are delighted that already several employers and employers’ organisations have endorsed the Award or spoken highly of it,” continued Professor Whatley. “Critical to its success in future is employer approval, as well as employer engagement as the scheme develops.”

*Today’s Students: Tomorrows Graduates* was presented jointly with the College of Art & Social Sciences (CASS) and drew a large crowd of staff, students and other stakeholders.

They gathered to hear from a series of academics from the University, external speakers and employers about how to best prepare graduates for the challenges of the modern jobs market, as well as taking part in breakout sessions which examine various issues relating to employability.

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Dundee has a strong literary history – from Mary Shelley, who first imagined Frankenstein while holidaying in Dundee, to recent Booker Prize winner A L Kennedy. Here LiteraryDundee Director Anna Day talks about building on that past to present a future full of books and the written word, whether in poetry or fiction.

**LiteraryDundee** is a website but it’s also a place where people come together, either virtually or in person, to discuss and enjoy everything about the written word, poetry, prose, fiction and non-fiction. We organise and advertise readings and talks, debates and discussions.

The most successful component of the LiteraryDundee brand is the **Dundee Literary Festival**, now in its third year and once again, a huge success. Backed by generous sponsorship from the new Landmark hotel and local trusts, The DC Thomson Charitable Trust and The Russell Trust, we saw visitor numbers rise by 20 per cent, enticed by the fantastic line-up that included David Peace, John Gray, Gerald Scarfe and Adam Mars-Jones. For children we welcomed back Joan Lingard and several schools attended a talk by former Children’s Laureate Anne Fine.

We had workshops with industry tips from People’s Friend and My Weekly, music from Fest n Furious and for the first time we linked up with DCA who had world exclusive showings of Red Riding, the Channel 4 trilogy based on the books by David Peace. David even popped down to DCA to introduce the screenings.
We value and encourage literacy – Literary Dundee educates as well as entertains – and, thanks to partnerships with Sensation Science Centre and Dundee City Council, we’ve developed a literacy scheme that started with 30 pupils from Dundee schools in 2008. We worked with the schools to make sure each student read and met the author of a book, Crazy Creatures. This year we enlarged the scheme to 300 students and want to extend it even further in 2010.

We encourage literacy for adults too – the Dundee Literary Salons are free and open to all. We invite internationally renowned and local writers as well as literary agents, publishers and interesting voices to DCA to speak about their work. We include an informal discussion at the end, where people can meet and chat to the invited guest.

New writers struggle to get their voices heard but great writing is rewarded with the richest prize for a new novel in the UK with the Dundee International Book Prize, worth £10,000. The award, announced in June as part of the Literary Festival, is for an unpublished novel on any theme, in any genre.

Local writer Chris Longmuir secured a publishing deal and was awarded the £10,000 prize for her novel Dead Wood which is set in Dundee and uncovers the terrifying truth behind a serial killer who seems to take his fatal inspiration from the Templeton Woods murders of 1980.

The presentation of her award was made by journalist and writer Magnus Linklater at a gala dinner on Friday 26 June in front of an audience of industry experts, shortlisted writers and sponsors of the prize.

Dundee is increasingly building its reputation as a powerhouse of publishing, with a highly successful literary festival, literary salons, the literary Dundee website and the Saturday Evening Lectures. Yet the prize has international reach – the short listed authors in 2009 come from all corners of the world, including Australia, New Zealand and America.

The previous winners have all gone on to have success and the authors have also gone on to produce further works of fiction and non-fiction. Andrew Murray Scott’s book Tumulus detailed bohemian Dundee through the 60s and 70s to the present day. The winning novel in 2002, Claire-Marie Watson’s The Curewife drew on the tale of Dundee’s last execution of a witch - Grissel Jaffray in 1669 and the winner in 2005 was Malcolm Archibald’s adventure on a whaling ship Whales for the Wizard. 2007 saw French resident Fiona Dunscombe scoop the accolade with her gritty, dark and full of life novel The Triple Point of Water.

The University of Dundee introduced the Creative Writing programme four years ago and appointed Kirsty Gunn as the Professor in charge of developing the course. There are now three ways to study Creative Writing, as part of an undergraduate Humanities Degree, as stand alone modules or as part or whole MLitt. It means that there’s something that appeals to almost every potential writer, so we’re producing some of the most exciting fresh talent in the UK – confirmed when a group of Dundee students was invited to the Edinburgh International Book Festival to read from their work. Agents approached all the students after the event, assuring us that our students were among the strongest in Scotland.

Dundee University Press, which sits alongside all the other literary activities in the University, goes from strength to strength. We’ve printed 12 books already in 2009 and in September we launch our first volume that includes fiction and poetry. For A’ That, a Celebration of Burns, features original work by DBC Pierre, Janice Galloway, Kirsty Gunn, Christopher A. Whatley, Bill Manhire, David Robb, Jim Stewart and Creative Writing students from the University of Dundee. With an introduction by Gavin Wallace, Head of Literature, Scottish Arts Council, the book features original artwork by Brigid Collins and was designed by Tim Bremner.

The book is available from bookshops and Amazon or you can buy it online at www.dup.dundee.ac.uk for £6.99. On the following pages we have an exclusive extract from the book, a short story by the author of God Vernon Little, DBC Pierre.
For a’ That
The Suppression and Undervaluation in Scotland of Robert Burns due to Historical Omission and Manipulation


Background
The first signs seemed like a joke. On 28th of March 1989 a student journal from Uppsala University in Sweden claimed that lyrics to an obscure Finnish tango, if translated into Turkish, recorded, and played backwards, rendered the following verse:

My blessin’s upon thy sweet wee lippie!
My blessin’s upon thy e’e-brie!
Thy smiles are sae like my blythe sodger laddie,
Thou’ s aye the dearer, and dearer to me!
But I’ll big a bow’r on yon bonie banks,
Where Tay rins wimplin’ by sae clear;
An’ I’ll cleeed thee in the tartan sae fine,
And mak thee a man like thy daddie dear.

Moreover the journal claimed that regardless of who read the translation, and even if they understood no English, the verse manifested in an authentic eighteenth-century Scottish brogue. Of course such a farcical entry in an obscure student’s periodical warranted – and received – scant attention or endorsement. But in 1992 the recording itself was certified by independent linguists from Ankara and Manchester, and circulated to certain faculty members at Uppsala. So improbable was its occurrence that the then-associate professor of English, Johannes Kjeldsen, quietly set about replicating the result in a double-blind experiment with translators and audio engineers chosen at random. The result was the same. A select multi-disciplinary crew of experts was let in on the finding, and after two feverish years, on the 10th November 1994, Kjeldsen delivered the announcement which exposed him to widespread ridicule among Burns scholars; he confirmed that the recording was a wordperfect rendition of the entire Robert Burns song of 1787, *Bonie Dundee*, stating moreover that it was in Burns’ own voice.

What infinitesimal chance would govern such an occurrence by coincidence? How otherwise could the recording be explained? Vexatious questions remained to be answered, and the professor duly took a cautious stance. On a summer break the following year, he loaded his trunks and travelled by steamer to Dundee, where the bard was famously born in a university robing-room, and where he spent all his youth pursuing scholarship in physics, art, astronomy, medicine, plus a new discipline – economics – led by his Scottish contemporary, the somnambulant and suspected simpleton Adam Smith.

It was here, two centuries later, in the University’s vast archive, that Burns’ personal correspondence offered Kjeldsen tantalising new clues. In a note from W.A. Mozart thanking the bard for advice on the arrangement of a first flute concerte, the composer mentions a garden party in Vienna which the two had earlier attended in the company of J.W. von Goethe and his visiting great-niece Clara Schumann. Here, after some abundance of refreshment, a quip by Emanuel Swedenborg that Turks and the Dutch must surely have their own heaven, prompted a reference by Burns to the ‘Byzantines’ present at the gathering – the first recorded instance of his having contact with Turks. The second instance appeared in a letter from Burns to the Comtesse D’Aubray some years later, after his heroic defeats in West Prussia and Schleswig-Holstein led to the collapse of their marriage: in the letter Burns recounts an exchange with the young Joseph Stalin in which they voice concerns about the emerging Ottoman empire. Over the typewritten word ‘Ottoman’ Burns has scrawled in ink: ‘Scanners.’
While falling short of absolute answers these leads were compelling enough to propel the professor eastwards where a discovery awaited him which, if released into the public domain, would shake the very foundations of Scottish national identity. Arriving in Damascus by caravan, Kjeldsen was met by classical scholar and chemist Cayman Al-Masri, who presented an archaeological find which eclipsed the recording in its significance. During excavations for an immigration bunker in Sardinia a text had been found which appeared to be an unknown set of notes and sketches by the classical Latin poet Albius Tibullus. In it, the following verse appeared:

On that place over there lives a girl;  
Could I describe her shape and style;  
She is far better than our girls,  
With her two sparkling eyes that defile.

She's sweeter than the morning dawn,  
When rising Phoebus first gives glimpse,  
And dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;  
Her sparkling eyes flash hot like imps'.

She's stately like you Afghan hash,  
That grows layers of nubile sheen,  
And drinks the stream with vigour brush;  
Like her eyes drink all between.

The fragment had already been studied at Port Said university by the time of Kjeldsen's arrival, even though scholars at Port Said were not part of the Burns investigation, nor could they have the least reason to suspect a Burns connection with the classical text. Still the verses rang a bell for one of them, whose interest was particularly drawn to this note in a second hand which appeared beneath Tibullus' words:

‘I’d put Cessnock Banks, Tibbie, for the lassie. Cessnock Banks and roguish een, there's ma good lad.’

Thermo-luminescent procedures dated both scripts to the century before Christ. Then Al-Masri used computer matching to arrive at the following startling counterpart attributed to Burns himself nearly eighteen centuries later:

On Cessnock banks a lassie dwells;  
Could I describe her shape and mein;  
Our lasses a’ she far excel;  
An’ she has twa sparkling roguish een.

She’s sweeter than the morning dawn,  
When rising Phoebus first is seen,  
And dew-drops twinkle o’er the lawn;  
An’ she has twa sparkling roguish een.

She’s stately like you youthful ash,  
That grows the cowslip braes between,  
And drinks the stream with vigour fresh;  
An’ she has twa sparkling roguish een.

Such was the astonishment of this finding that, in a move unprecedented anywhere in the academic world, funding was granted to the scholars to simply close their files for six months and recoil. But it is the nature of great secrets to escape, as the impact of their news is too weighty for a single consciousness to bear. In the case of the Burns mystery this escape immediately took on teeming proportions, travelling like the draught of a blaze through the narrower corridors of academia, where obsessives of every discipline began matching all written material against Burns’ known works. Original tablets, papyruses, vellums and papers were decanted and checked again for evidence of a second hand.

Within four days the switchboard in Damascus was alight. Three discoveries from Rome, a dozen from Constantinople, and from Leipzig an indication of more substantial feelings between Burns and Tibullus than those of simple mentor and pupil, as evidenced in this original of a work long merely associated with Strathspey:

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day,  
Ye wadna been sae shy;  
For laik o’ gear ye lightly me,  
But, travers, I care na by.

Yestreen I met you on the moon,  
Ye spak na, but gaed by like stour;  
Ye geck at me because I’m poor,  
But fient a hair care I.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

When coming hame on Sunday last,  
Upon the road as I cam past,  
Ye snufft and ga’e your head a cast-  
But travers I care’t na by.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

I doubt na, lass, but ye may think,  
Because ye hae the name o’ clink,  
That ye can please me at a wink,  
Where’er ye like to try.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

But sorrow tak’ him that’s sae mean,  
Altho’ his pouch o’ coin were clean,  
Wha follows ony saucy quean,  
That looks sae proud and high.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

Altho’ a lad were e’er sae smart,  
If that he want the yellow dirt,  
Ye’ll cast your head anither airt,  
And answer him fu’ dry.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak’ my advice:  
Your daddie’s gear maks you sae nice;  
The deil a ane wad speir your price,  
Were ye as poor as I.

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day, &c.
There lives a lass beside yon park,
I'd rather ha' her in her sark,
Than you wi' a' your thousand mark;
That gars you look sae high.
O Tibbie, I ha'e seen the day, &c.

And this was not all.

In March 1995 a message arrived by hand from a Cardinal Taekema, then in charge of the Vatican's highly guarded Papal archive. Opening the message was to prove the beginning of the end for Kjeldsen's research. In strictest secrecy, the cardinal invited him to a suite at the Hotel Raphael in Rome, where he showed the professor copies of biblical and pre-biblical originals never seen outside the Papal circle. The first of these was an early draft of the first psalm:

The man, in life wherever plac'd,
Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
Nor learns their guilty lore!

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees,
Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
Shall to the ground be cast,
And, like the rootless stubble, tost
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore,
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

Next, however, the cardinal produced a document that carried behind it all the fearsome weight which the Vatican and its worldwide legions of followers could muster; a weight now turned to the suppression of any further Burns research.

It was a sketch, with notes, attributed to the apostle Paul at the Last Supper itself. In the sketch, a thirteenth figure appears beside the Nazarene – indeed he occupies the very centre of the table, and all present are turned to him agog. A quotation appears in an uncertain hand below the drawing:

Let other poets raise a fracas
‘Bout wines, an’ wines, an’ drucken Bacchus,
An’ rabbit names an’ stories wrack us,
An’ grate our lug:
I sing the juice Scotch bear can mak us,
In glass or jug.

Epilogue to the dissertation

Once the meeting with the cardinal was over, every document, expert, artefact or research paper from Kjeldsen’s quest evaporated without trace or explanation, just as quickly as they had all appeared. Moreover this happened precisely as the world of scholarship awaited with bated breath the proofs of his wild assertions. Kjeldsen was socially and professionally ruined. For a time between 1996 and 1999 he took to the pen himself, and ran with the Scottish poets. He inspired sufficient comradeship in these that, as he lay in a Glasgow tenement consumed by his loss and by strong drink, the Scottish poets mounted a final challenge to the Vatican. A small congress was eventually mounted by the Holy See to be seen to dispense with the matter once and for all. And from it – which was the last ever heard on the matter, given the church’s mighty powers – this anecdotal account of a final exchange between Scottish poet and clergy:

‘My son, you were bound to lose – you have no structure, no hierarchy.’

‘Truth dis nae need a structure,’ replied the poet.

‘But there is no power invested in you – you carry only the power of your self, and your loose association with others of your kind.

Whereas look, look at this,’ the cardinal beckoned a passing student priest, ‘– soon he will be a priest, and have invested in him all the devotion of a flock of souls. Then he might become a cardinal, and have invested in him the faith of many flocks, many priests. Or he might become a bishop, and speak for whole cities of souls. You see?’

‘An’ then wha’?’ scoffed the poet.

‘Well. Conceivably I suppose he could become pope.’

‘An’ then wha’?’

At this the cardinal is said to have thrown down his hands and shaken his head, exasperated: ‘Look, what more do you want – that he becomes God?’

And the poet sniffed, and before turning for haim, said:
‘One o’ our lads did it.’

1 Upps Gamla Smorgasbladet, Volume I, No. 3, p.14
2 Elsa, Kohtalon Lapsi
3 Of course the word Bonie in the title of Burns’s song has universally been taken as an earlier spelling of Bonnie, but this is not so, as a note from Burns himself confirms. The word he used was Bony, referring to Dundee’s stark, skeletal condition in the wake of simultaneous and prolonged attacks across the Tay from both France and Prussia, the latter of which occupied Tayport and Leuchars for nearly six years leading up to Dundee’s victory, and the subsequent signing of the Fife Treaty in 1896. As Burns later quipped: ‘There’s nane’ll tak the wee auf mein bonie auld Dundee.’
4 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Flute Concerto No. 1, K.313
5 Anecdotally one of the first ever typewritten letters, posted within months of Burns’ invention of the autodigitary letteruichter, or typewriter.

DBC Pierre was born in 1961 in Reynella, Australia. He was brought up in Mexico and the UK, and now lives in Ireland. His debut novel, Vernon God Little was the winner of the 2003 Man Booker Prize for Fiction. His second novel, Ludmila’s Broken English, was published in 2006.
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PHILOSOPHY, CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES
The success of this year’s record-breaking Dundee Degree Show has seen the University pick up a prestigious prize at the Scottish Event Awards 2009.

It beat off competition from schools, colleges and universities across Scotland to become the inaugural winner of the Best Educational Event award.

The Scottish Event Awards recognised the best events staged in Scotland over the past year, along with the support services that made them possible. They celebrate excellence in a number of areas, including exhibitions, conferences, product launches, sports events and venues.

Representatives of Duncan of Jordanstone and the University’s External Relations department picked up the award at a glittering ceremony held at the Hilton Hotel, Glasgow on Friday 11 September.

CLAIRE CRAWFORD • BDES HONS ILLUSTRATION
Illustrations drawn from the front row of the ‘Designs On... The Future’ catwalk event, which opened this year’s Degree Show. More of Claire’s work can be seen at www.clairecrawford.co.uk
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