

# Bristol in the **americas**

newsletter for bristol alumni in north america

NUMBER7 2006



## Penn State meets Bristol

**M**embers of the highly-regarded Penn State Musical Theatre visited Bristol in March last year.

Hot on the heels of performances in New York and London, 16 American students entertained audiences in the Wickham Theatre and took part in drama workshops alongside Bristol students.

Bristol and Pennsylvania State are both members of the Worldwide University

Network, an international partnership committed to tackling some of the key research issues of our time.

One of the purposes of the visit was to strengthen ties between network members. Professor Eric Thomas, Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University, said: 'We regard Penn State as friends. We were proud to host their performance in our Drama Department, which was the first department of its kind in any UK university.'



MARTIN CHAINEY

Penn State students perform at the Wickham Theatre during a visit to the University

**W**elcome to *Bristol In the Americas*.

As you'll see there's been plenty going on in the past year. Alumni based in the Americas are certainly keeping the Bristol heritage alive.

You'll also read about continued financial support from Canadian and US alumni – money that is invested in the continuing pursuit of academic excellence.

In addition to alumni activities, Bristol is developing some exciting links with US universities, including a research link-up with top-ranked research and enterprise universities in southern California. Together, the UK and US researchers will look at improving technology transfer and economic development in both countries. I look forward to hearing more about this.

I do hope our vibrant community of Bristol alumni based in the Americas will continue to grow and develop. There's so much going on and a lot to be proud of.

**Geoffrey Rowley (BA 1958)**  
Director, University of Bristol  
Foundation Inc



## ALUMNI GATHERING ON BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

A meeting is planned for alumni on May 20 2006. This is of particular interest for those who live in the Pacific North-West and British Columbia, though of course, others will be very welcome. The meeting will be held at the home of Wendy Seanor (BSc 1959, MSc 1962) and Don Seanor (BSc Chemistry 1957, PhD Chemistry 1962) on Bainbridge Island just west of Seattle. For more information contact jbinsted99@cs.com.

## Convocation Weekend 2005

**John Binsted (BA 1954), West Coast Convenor, reports on the 2005 Convocation Weekend...**

‘ The most recent Convocation Reunion Weekend held many delights. There were the usual encounters with friends from years ago (“you haven’t changed a bit!”) and a series of lunches for alumni celebrating their 50th, 40th, 30th and 25th years of graduation.

A fascinating presentation by the Department of Earth Sciences was of particular interest to us West Coasters. Recommendation: don’t invest in a holiday home on the slopes of Mount St Helens for the next million years. Meanwhile, presentations were made on the architectural developments planned across the precinct leading up to the centenary in 2009.

There were 80 alumni from overseas countries taking part in the weekend. Bristol in the Americas was represented by, among others, Wendy Vandame and Ian Sellick from our New York chapter, Tom Mall from Florida and myself. Plan ahead and make sure you’re there next year. ’



‘You haven’t changed a bit!’

## Millions for US research link-up

A consortium of universities, including Bristol, has secured significant Government funding to work with similar research institutes in California.

The SETSquared partnership, a collaboration of the Universities of Bristol, Bath, Southampton and Surrey, has been awarded a £1.5 million grant by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The grant will be used to allow the largest university enterprise collaboration in the UK to work with the University of California San Diego and the University of California Irvine.

The UK and US researchers will look at technology transfer, the high-growth research and industry areas of telecommunications, life science, the environment and new energy, nanotechnology and new materials.



ADN/AT

Above: A team of maritime archaeologists, led by Dr Simon Spooner of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, has been granted survey/inventory permits by the American National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to conduct maritime archaeological surveys of a number of wrecks in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

## Update from Dawn

‘ When I started my job, just over a year ago, I wondered how Bristol alumni in America would feel about being visited by someone from the University. I asked myself, “Will there still be a bond to Bristol in a group of alumni living thousands of miles away?” Well, it seems that Bristol leaves an indelible mark on many of its graduates and over the past year I have been overwhelmed by the warmth with which many of our alumni still regard their time at the University.



Travelling to California, Boston and New York City has allowed me to meet a diverse group of people – from trailblazers in industry to leaders in academia, creative thinkers to entrepreneurs. I have really enjoyed meeting so many alumni now living in the States. I look forward to meeting many more of you in 2006 and updating you with some of the exciting plans the University of Bristol has as we look towards our Centenary Campaign in 2009 and beyond. ’



Left: Becky Sue Epstein with Fred Noe next to the statue of his late father, Booker Noe, the head of Jim Beam

## A journey to the Land of Bourbon

**Becky Sue Epstein has what must seem to many people the perfect job. She travels around the world writing about wines and spirits. A self-confessed 'half a shandy in the pub' drinker while studying at Bristol, she picked up her passion for aperitif and after-dinner wines as restaurant critic for the *LA Times* in the 1980s and '90s. As *Intermezzo* magazine's Senior Editor for Wine and Spirits, she is now based on the East Coast. Below she recounts her latest venture, when she found herself wending her way through the hills and vales of misty, green Kentucky, in search of the origins of American bourbon.**

**H**aving grown up with the idea that bourbon was the rough province of Southern gentlemen, I was pleased to find that aged Kentucky bourbon is a mellow, complex and enjoyable spirit. The first aromas are of sweet caramelized wood and grain. Take a sip and the flavour continues down the caramel path, formed by the heat of Kentucky summers and toasted American wood barrels.

As with fine Scotch, it is often best to add a bit of pure water to your glass while tasting. Or, in the words of Fred Noe (head of Jim Beam): 'Cut her down till she pleases you.' Ever heard of 'bourbon and branch'? This refers not only to the water added to the glass, but the branchwater that wells up through a layer of limestone rock to become rivulets then 'branches' of the leaping brooks and streams of the Kentucky countryside. This water is a critical component of bourbon. There's also at least 51% corn. And the rest is rye, wheat and/or barley, in proportions determined by the master distillers of each product.

The Wild Turkey brand has been the province of master distiller Jimmy Russell since the 1950s. A traditional Kentuckian, he refused to divulge any secrets of grain

or blending while showing us around his plant, set high on a bluff in the horse-raising, Kentucky bluegrass part of the state. Then there are the ultra-moderns such as distiller Chris Morris who makes Woodford Reserve bourbon in a newly-renovated factory, with gleaming copper pot-stills – proud to reveal all during a tour.

As it happens, the first bourbon man I met was not a Master Distiller, but is the head of one of the great distilleries: Bill Samuels, Jr. His father is said to have re-invented the bourbon industry in the 1950s, by formulating his own recipe with softer wheat and no rye in the blend. Bill's mother made up the logo, and they called it Maker's Mark, after the stamp that a silversmith uses to identify his work. This distillery is laid out like a Victorian village, with buildings set around a square of lawn bisected by one of those all-important, Kentucky limestone-water creeks.

There, I was invited to add my own individual bit of artistry to the world of bourbon by dipping a filled bottle head-first into warm wax and giving it my own inimitable twirl, thereby forming the smooth red wax cap that distinguishes each bottle of Maker's Mark bourbon. But now I can never crack it open to drink it. I guess I'll have to buy another bottle...

## inbrief

### UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL FOUNDATION INC

American alumni continued to help current students by donating over £27,500 to the Annual Fund in 2004/05. Across the border in Canada, donations exceeded £4,000.

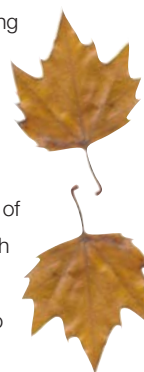


### FIRST FLIGHT FROM BRISTOL TO US

Bristol and its American alumni grew a step closer last year with the first ever flight from Bristol International Airport to the United States. A group of researchers from the University's Centre for Applied Nonlinear Mathematics were amongst those on board the inaugural flight from Bristol into Newark airport in May.

### UNDERSTANDING WEATHERING

A British and American consortium researching the process of weathering has been awarded a £1.74 million grant by the Natural Environment Research Council. The consortium, which is led by the University of Sheffield, along with the Universities of Bristol and Leeds, in partnership with Pennsylvania State University and other associates in the US, hopes to establish a global understanding of how weathering is affected by natural and human activities.



### UPPER MIDWEST ALUMNI MEETING

Tom Mall (MA 1965) is organising the first Upper Midwest alumni meeting. It will be held on June 10 2006 in Appleton, Wisconsin. Email Tom at thomas.mall1@verizon.net.

# American scholarship successes

After a brief visit home to her family in Pennsylvania, last year's American scholarship winner, Shanna Ludwig, has returned to Bristol to undertake a PhD in Garden History in the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology.

Shanna said: 'To better understand the medieval gardens I'll be looking at, I'm learning Latin and attending some landscape archaeology lectures. I will also be participating in the planning of the second annual Garden History Society Conference which will focus on

the medieval garden. The scholarship has been so helpful in the realisation of my aspiration to study garden history.'

This year's winner, Emmanuel Shwan, felt the international environment of Bristol was the best choice for his MSc in International Relations. New Yorker Emmanuel said: 'I'm deaf, and because I have to pay for very expensive communication support, the scholarship is a significant help. Without that to cover my tuition fees, I don't think I'd have been able to afford to come here.'



**Emmanuel Shwan**

## Bristol alumni reunite in Niagara



**Left to right: Angela Wellman (BSc 1956), Pam Welbourn (BSc 1956), Judith Humphries (BA 1967), George Plant (BSc 1963), Dennis Osmond (BSc 1951), Annette Bourgeois, David Burns (BSc 1958), John Proctor, Heather Proctor (BSc 1964), Don Lawson (BSc 1956), Diana Burns (BA 1961), Honey Jones, Tony Jones (BA 1971), John Bull (BSc 1958)**

The fourth annual reunion of alumni in eastern Canada began at the Shaw Festival in Niagara on the Lake, Ontario, with the play *You Never Can Tell*.

From here, the group moved to the Niagara Culinary Institute for a tour and tasting session at the teaching winery,

where all the wines are crafted by teams of students under the supervision of highly acclaimed winemakers. A four-course dinner in the Institute's dining room, prepared and served by students under the direction of top regional chefs, rounded off the day's events for the 19 Bristol alumni and partners.

## Reunion in Leucadia

A red, white and blue Union Jack flying high above a Californian ranch-style house in Leucadia was a sure sign of the Bristol alumni reunion at the home of Nicola and Ron Ranson on May 7 last year.

More than 25 alumni from as far away as the Bay Area met to sip Bristol sherry, provided by Kevin Nagel (BSc 2002) who cited the local drink as 'one more reason I stayed in Britain', and watch a screening of the documentary *A University Challenged*. There was plenty of reminiscing, and of course, plenty of tea.



**Above: *The North Country Times* (May 8 2005) reported on the reunion**