



S1

The newsletter for all
ScHARR graduates

Issue 5

May 2009

Hats off to latest ScHARR graduates

Also in this issue:

[ScHARR Wedding](#), [RAE Results](#), Alumni Updates, [Paul Bissell Interview](#)

Welcome to this issue of S1



Dear alumni

Economic recession? Flu pandemic?. Forget the doom and gloom and enjoy some good news for a change with this issue of S1. The aim has always been to keep alumni informed of current SchARR news and updated about other alumni. This issue is no exception and is packed with positives—it features the latest graduation, a summer wedding, PhD and job successes and many other stories.

As usual, see below about how you can keep in touch and contribute to the next S1 by telling us about your stories. We hope you enjoy this issue.

Richard Cooper
Alumni Co-ordinator



Whose house was this
in Regent Street?

See page 6 to find out

How to Keep in Touch

1. Make sure we have an up-to-date e-mail address, so if you change your e-mail address, let us know!
2. Use 'Sheffield Reunited' to create a profile of yourself, so your fellow graduates can keep in touch.
3. Send us some news about what you are doing. We'll consider any news for publication in S1.
4. Become an alumni contact and become our link with other students from your cohort year - just email us.
5. Let us know details of any of your former friends and colleagues from SchARR student days who are doing interesting things or making a mark, whether it's in their professional or personal lives.
6. Visit the SchARR alumni web page at:
<http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/alumni>

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Going Up

ScHARR tops RAE list

There was an early Christmas present for ScHARR's staff when they heard the School had won top honours for research quality. Academics and researchers gathered early one December morning in the Pemberton Room to hear Dean Ron Akehurst announce the long-awaited findings of the UK's Research Assessment Exercise or RAE. The news was better than most had expected!

The RAE panel, which comprises the leading experts in the field of health services research (HSR) in the country, awarded ScHARR the prestigious accolade of having the highest 'research power' of any department in the UK.

What this means is that ScHARR has the largest concentration of research activity in HSR assessed as either world-leading or internationally excellent among the 23 universities who made a submission. ScHARR did not have the highest quality rating, but submitted many more staff than other departments to the RAE panel. Overall, the School tops the tables for research quality, beating the world-leading London School of Hygiene and York University. Many departments submitted a dozen or less staff.

The results show that one eighth of all the HSR research conducted in the UK takes place in ScHARR. That compares with 11 per cent for the London School of Hygiene, and 5 per cent each for Oxford and Bristol Universities. ScHARR's research is also likely to be world-leading or internationally outstanding.

The RAE results came after four years hard work. Each academic or researcher had to provide their best four papers for consideration by the panel, who read each carefully to assess its quality. The lowest category was for work of only local significance, while the top ranks were reserved for internationally-excellent or world-leading research papers. (Nick Fox)

2009 ScHARR Graduations

The Convocation Hall in Octagon House at the University of Sheffield was the venue for the latest ScHARR student graduations this January. Forty eight ScHARR students attended in total—2 MA, 35 MPH and 11 MSc—representing the range of courses offered in the School. The Higher Degree Congregation ceremony involved the usual contrast between the processional formality of the award ceremony itself, and the subsequent celebrations, such as the jubilant throwing into the air of the mortar board hat, as the front cover of this issue of S1 shows. The University of Sheffield has not yet acted as some other university have, however, in prohibiting the traditional celebration of throwing mortar boards into the air. The tradition originated in the US amongst Naval seamen throwing away their Midshipsman's caps for Officer's hats, but has led to some reported accidents to graduating students as a result.

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ScHARR Graduation Octagon House January 2009

Going down

Weak pound attracts students

Good news for international students hoping to study in the UK. As many of you will be aware, the last year has seen unprecedented changes in the global economic markets. In the UK, this has led to a number of problems, including dramatic falls in the value of sterling. During 2008, the pound 'weakened' against

many currencies, losing 23 per cent of its value against the euro and 27 per cent against the US dollar!

As a result, UK universities such as the University of Sheffield and ScHARR have become more competitive to international students. Course fees and the cost of living have all become more affordable as a result.

As ScHARR alumni will no doubt remember, Sheffield has always been one of the UK's most affordable cities but even traditionally expensive locations like the capital, London, have fallen dramatically down the list of most expensive cities in the world. So if you know of anyone who is thinking of studying abroad, be sure to tell them that there has never been a better time to study here at ScHARR in Sheffield!

Teaching inequalities in public health

MPH course director, and reader in public health, Paul Bissell, talked to Richard Cooper about his career in academia and his passion for teaching, public health and inequalities.

A move north from Wolverhampton to Manchester in the early 1980s was to be the start of a long association with university life for Paul Bissell. Having 'scraped a place' at Manchester University to study Politics and Sociology, Paul became interested in Marxist theory and a concern about 'what sociology should offer to everyday life.' Like many students, he recalled also enjoying the music, art and bars! It was in 1992, however, working alongside the 'inspirational' Jennie Popay and Gareth Williams, that Paul



become more interested in narratives and the experiences of health and illness. Such concerns together with inequalities and the social determinants of health continue to influence Paul's work—as he remarked: *'the social and material context of peoples' lives affect*

their health, and public health needs to be much more upstream.'

A move to pharmacy

Paul's next move was somewhat different, when he joined the School of Pharmacy at the University of Manchester and was involved in various studies that explored aspects of medicine use - particularly in terms of lay understanding, risk and consumption. For Paul, such research was still linked to his other interests, since *'medicines are essentially democratic'* and their consumption embodied patient choice. After completing his PhD, Paul took up a lecturing post at the University of Nottingham in 2001. Still within a school of pharmacy, Paul recalled the sometimes difficult task of bringing



sociology and social pharmacy to undergraduates; he began supervising PhD students too—a role he continues to find very rewarding.

And so to SchARR...

Bringing Paul's career up to date, he left Nottingham in 2005 to work in the public health section of SchARR - initially as a senior lecturer but now as reader in public health and deputy director of section. Paul reflected on a range of opportunities in his current role in SchARR. Although still very much active in research Paul described his passion for teaching, arguing that whilst research has provided important

evidence, teaching is needed to bring socially meaningful benefits. Using social inequalities again as an example, he noted that *'we know what causes inequality, it's how we campaign to change it that's important.'* From the Black Report in 1980 to recent influences such as Wilkinson and Pickett's *The Spirit Level*, Paul's commitments in academia are to reflect on, but ultimately to reduce, inequalities and the impact they have upon health.



Proud member of staff

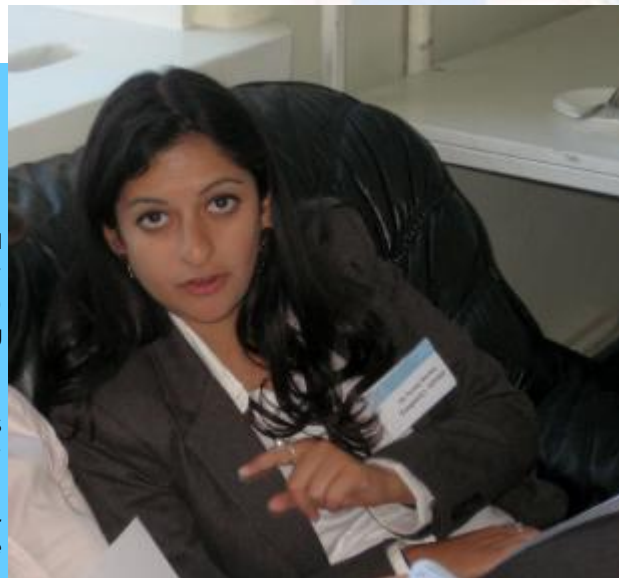
Asked to explain the success of SchARR and his obvious pride in being a member of its staff, Paul felt that this was in large part due to those who he worked with. This started with the dean, Ron Akehurst, and extended to other staff and academics. He argued that SchARR was very much a multi-disciplinary school, and whether one needed help with teaching or a research proposal, you could be sure to find someone with the right expertise who would be able to help you.

As to the future, Paul hopes to build upon his current activities in SchARR, and talked enthusiastically about developing the public health profile of SchARR, whilst continuing to provide high quality teaching and undertaking research in areas such as inequalities, obesity and medicines.

Sharma ScHARR Job

Tarang Sharma Europubhealth 2006/08

After completing her Masters course based at the Universities of Sheffield and Copenhagen, Tarang reported to S1 that she is *'now happily back at ScHARR.'* Working in the Health Economics and Decision Science (HEDS) section of ScHARR as a systematic reviewer since September 2008, Tarang is currently involved in a project, reviewing the clinical and cost effectiveness of new health technologies and interventions, to inform the commissioning process. Also being a member of the 'Teaching and training' HEDS Functional Working Group, she is working to improve the current masters' courses and internal training programmes within the section. As she recalled, *'The Europubhealth master's course provided me with a great foundation to further my career in public health and I could think of no better place to continue my work than ScHARR!'*



Doors to academia opened

Pablo Ronzoni MPH 2006/07

Pablo enrolled on the Master of Public Health course whilst on a career break from medicine, something he described as *'one of best educational decisions I made.'* It allowed Pablo to explore the psychosocial aspects of health—something he felt his traditional medical education had neglected. It also provided an opportunity for him to develop a particular interest in mental health. Currently, Pablo is working as a Clinical Academic Fellow (ACF) in Social and Epidemiological Psychiatry for the NHS and the University of Leicester, and he recognised the influence of his time at ScHARR on this choice of work: *'It is clear that the doors of academia have been opened due to the MPH. The ACF is a brand new position within the NHS, as a way to encourage doctors to get involved in academic activities, combining them with the traditional clinical training.'* Pablo hopes to continue developing his clinical skills as well as becoming a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He is also interested in studying for a PhD, based on cultural variations in deliberate self harm. Of his time spent at ScHARR on the MPH, Pablo reflected that it *'not only al-*

lowed me to meet great people from very different professional and cultural backgrounds, but has also been a very important tool to boost my career.'



Job offers due to University

Abiola Adeyinka MPH 2007/08

After studying for a year here in ScHARR, Abiola returned home to Nigeria and has fond memories of her time in Sheffield: *'I had a wonderful experience during my stay at the University Of Sheffield, Meeting new people from all over the world and forging lasting friendships with them.'* She has recently started work with the Harvard AIDS prevention Initiative in Nigeria as a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. In this role, Abiola is responsible for the implementation and evaluation activities for the Central Office and also ensures that the quality of the Organisation's Program's activities adhere to donor guidelines by supporting the development and implementation of appropriate mechanism to ensure quality. She clearly felt that her time at the University of Sheffield in ScHARR was beneficial for her subsequent career prospects: *'When I returned to my country, I had numerous offers due to the University's reputation.'* Summing up her experiences in ScHARR, she noted that *'I look back at my time in Sheffield as a student of the University Of Sheffield with wonderful memories and I feel proud to be an alumnus of the University.'*



A wet sight-seeing trip



On their introductory tour of the city, two of the current Euro-pubhealth students couldn't resist getting a little bit closer to the water fountains in the Peace Garden in Sheffield city centre. Apparently, this was the result of a dare that Liaquat ali Shaikh (pictured right) would not run through the famous water feature in the city centre, along with Maria del rocio Fernandez Mendez (pictured left). Luckily the weather in Sheffield in September last year was not too cold!

Who lived here on Regent Street?

The photo shows a Victorian terraced house at 50, Regent Street, on the corner of Portobello Street, Sheffield - near where Regent Court and SchARR now stands. The house no longer stands but was home for a time to a young Samuel Plimsoll (1824-1898). Plimsoll was a politician but was most famously associated with the introduction of the Plimsoll line markings added to the hulls of ships. Plimsoll campaigned for legislation to prevent the frequent



loss of sailors' lives that occurred when ships were over-loaded and sank, at a time when international trade was increasingly dramatically. The plimsoll line was originally a circle with a horizontal line through it, indicating the maximum cargo load that a ship could take. It soon became law for British ships to have such markings and in 1930, the Load Line convention resulted in international adoption of the system.



Image reproduced by kind permission of Mike Spick at the Sheffield Local Studies Library

Wedding Bells Beckon on BMedSci

With the last cohort of BMedSci Health and Human Sciences students graduating this summer, it is fitting that the course will sign off with SchARR's first ever undergraduate wedding. Gary Toon reports



S1 is delighted to report that Victoria Petch will marry Jonathan Reynolds at 3pm on Saturday the 13th of June 2009. The fact that they actually met is also a story in itself as, apart from a last minute change of heart, Vicky had primarily come to Sheffield from her home in Warwickshire to study German. However, Germanic Studies' loss was certainly local-boy Jonathan's gain, as on the first day in SchARR they were the first two students to arrive for the introductory session. They sat together on that very first day and

'They sat together on that very first day and immediately hit it off.'

immediately hit it off. It took all of 6 weeks before they officially started going out with each other which apparently was obvious to everyone else on the course that it was just a matter of time.

After completing their elective placements in April, Vicky and Jonathan will now be splitting their time between fine-tuning their wed-

ding arrangements and writing their dissertations!

After they marry in June, they are both looking forward to graduation in July and from there Vicky hopes to go into local community work working with children whilst Jonathan hopes to continue to study and complete a Masters Degree in Nutrition.

We wish the happy couple all the best for the future both with their marriage and their careers.

Wanted: Placement opportunities for new MPH International Development course

SchARR and the Geography Department are launching the new MPH International Development course next year, which aims to provide an exciting combination of academic and professional learning. A field class in Kenya is already planned, but Graham Jones would be very interested in hearing from alumni working in health and/or development organisations, who might be able to host a placement student for 6 to 8 weeks in June and July 2010. The student would gain experience of practical health and development projects, whilst the organisation would be able to benefit from their abilities, and fresh perspectives. See <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/geography/pg/masters/mphid.html> for more details on the course. Graham can be contacted at graham.jones@sheffield.ac.uk

A Personal Look Back...

Basma Al Buhairan MPH 2006 PhD 2009

Basma typifies the success stories of many SchARR graduates. Not only did she feature as the 'face' of the MPH on the promotional material, but she also recently successfully defended her thesis. Now back in Riyadh, she recalls her time in SchARR.

shift and do something that would open many doors for my career. It was then that I decided to get a degree in Public Health. I registered on the New Route MPH Integrated Doctor-

ate Programme in September 2005. At first, I thought that doing another Masters may actually be a waste of time for me. However, I quickly realized whilst on the MPH course that I made the right decision. What I remember most about the MPH was the 'Principles of Public Health' module that was taught by Dr. Kevin Smith. This was one of my most favourite modules that gave me breadth, insight and perspective into Public Health. I also vividly recall Kevin's amazing style of lecturing. He had a talent for keeping the audience engaged throughout his lecture. Overall, the MPH programme was useful and it added to my personal and professional development.

I started my PhD in October 2006. Whilst on the PhD, I realized that the MPH modules equipped me with particular skills that I was able to utilize more efficiently. Overall, I have fond memories of doing a PhD. This is not to say that I did not have any disappointing and un-motivating moments. There were times when I actually felt lost and unsure of what to do next. The time I enjoyed the most during the PhD was doing the data collection because I began to see evidence and things started to make more

sense. I did not allow frustration to get the better of me and my determination, will and confidence allowed me to overcome such feelings and thoughts and move forward.

SchARR was interesting, stimulating and challenging

My three and a half years experience at SchARR was interesting, stimulating and challenging. I met a number of friendly, supportive and resourceful individuals, many of whom I am friends with. I will never forget my time at SchARR and the experience I gained during the past few years will allow me to develop myself in so many ways.



I have moved back to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and have taken on a new role as Assistant Deputy Executive Director in Medical Services at King Abdulaziz Medical City, Riyadh. I'm off to a new challenge, one very much different than my previous management role. I will also be involved in research and teaching activities.

Before coming to SchARR, my education and experience was mainly in pure science and management of a large clinical department. About a year prior to deciding to go back to school, I decided that I wanted to make a

Tell us about your time at SchARR. Send 500 words and a digital photograph to scharralumni@shef.ac.uk