



# S1

The newsletter for all  
SchHARR graduates

Issue 7

July 2010

In this issue: **Latest SchHARR news**, **Alumni Updates**, Staff artists,  
**Research Showcase**, **Scholarship opportunities**, **Interview with Dean**

# Welcome to this issue of S1

Dear alumni,

Summer is officially here in Sheffield and this means another edition of S1, the alumni newsletter for all former ScHARR students. The aim is still to keep alumni informed of what is happening in ScHARR, and what other alumni are doing now. This issue will be the last one with Professor Ron Akehurst as Dean of ScHARR, and it contains an interview with him, reflecting on his career. There are details of various ScHARR events, and invitations to maintain links with ScHARR, not only as an alumni of the university, but as a possible host for a student placement, and even for PhD study back in ScHARR. Do stay in touch!



Dr Richard Cooper  
 ScHARR Alumni co-ordinator  
 Lecturer in Public Health

## 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: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/alumni/keepintouch>
3. Send us some news about what you are doing now, or your thoughts on your time at ScHARR.
4. Add 'ScHARR TSU' as a friend on Facebook® : <http://www.facebook.com/ScHARR.TSU>
5. Send us details of friends and colleagues from ScHARR student days who are doing interesting things or making a mark, whether it's in their personal or professional lives.

To get in touch email [richard.cooper@shef.ac.uk](mailto:richard.cooper@shef.ac.uk)

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## Another New ScHARR Course

ScHARR is pleased to announce plans for another new course, bringing the total number of courses offered to fourteen. The new course is a post-graduate MSc in International Health Technology, Pricing and Reimbursement. It is targeted at those working in the pharmaceutical, medical devices and diagnostic industries, and will provide key skills and understanding in areas such as market processes, pricing and customer needs across different countries. The course is still awaiting final University approval, but will be offered as both a full- and part-time course.

## University Award for Green Impact

ScHARR demonstrated its contribution to environmental concerns, by including the Public Health section in the University's Green Impact scheme this year. The national university scheme aimed to promote greater environmental awareness and lead to energy saving practices and reduced waste. The Public Health Section received the Bronze Award from the Vice Chancellor, **Keith Burnett**, in recognition of policies such as promoting double-sided printing using networked printers, having energy saving management plans and a visible environment notice board. Many of these



linked into more general ScHARR activities, and the efforts of staff like **Sue Mansbridge**, who developed a toner cartridge recycling system with monitoring to enable changes in use to be identified. The aim is to continue to raise awareness and change attitudes in relation to ScHARR staff and environmental issues and hopefully gain the silver or even gold award next year!

## Alcohol Policy Work Continues

Senior Lecturer Dr Petra Meier has led a team of international experts to secure funding from the Medical Research Council (MRC) totalling more than £1 million pounds. The research will explore policy interventions to reduce alcohol-related harm. The research involves ScHARR collaborations with colleagues from Loughborough University, the London School of Economics, and advisors from the US, Canada and Australia. Commenting on the research,



Petra Meier said: *"Risky alcohol consumption causes major medical, social and economic problems for the UK and can have devastating effects on individuals and families. This MRC-funded research programme is a great opportunity to work with a team of leading UK and international scientists to provide policy makers with the best possible evidence on how to tackle this important public health problem."*

Professor Alan Brennan could be heard recently on national radio, when he was interviewed for the BBC Radio 4 More or Less Show, hosted by Tim Hartford. Alan was invited to discuss findings from a ScHARR report into modelling of alcohol pricing which had influenced a recent UK government proposal to lower the alcohol limit for drivers from 80mg to 50mg per 100ml.

BBC  
RADIO



More or Less:  
Behind The Stats



## Death of John Pemberton

The epidemiologist, Dr John Pemberton, who died in February 2010, had strong links to the University of Sheffield, and his name was proudly used for the main lecture rooms in Regent Court. His career in public



health medicine was unrivalled and he researched, taught and published on many aspects of public health and medicine more generally. Born in Essex in 1912, he went on to study at University College London in the 1930s, and his early research work involved developing a cohort of children to study the effects of poverty on nutrition. One of his greatest achievements was the co-founding of two hugely influential organisations—the International Corresponding Club, which became the International Epidemiological Association, and the Society for Social Medicine. He was also very active internationally, and served on various World Health Organisation committees, promoting the use of epidemiology for global public health. His links to Sheffield and the University began back in the 1940s when he had medical appointments at the Sheffield Royal Hospital and the University of Sheffield. It was at this time that he worked with the Nobel prize-winning biochemist **Hans Krebs**, on vitamin deficiency in sailors. His other work included studies of air pollution, and respiratory problems associated with flax seed, and the work of general practitioners.

John Pemberton retired in 1977 from Queen's University, Belfast and returned to Yorkshire, living for the next thirty years in Hathersage, near Sheffield, where he painted, wrote and continued to research and teach at the University of Sheffield.

# Dean Ron Akehurst recalls his time at ScHARR— 'in good company'

Dean of ScHARR Professor Ron Akehurst, talked to Richard Cooper about his background in health economics, his reflection on ScHARR and beyond. One might be forgiven for wondering what Ron had let himself in for, back in 1993, when he found himself in windowless 'cupboard' of a room, with a telephone and no computer. This was in fact the beginnings of ScHARR, with Ron having been headhunted by the then Vice Chancellor, Gareth Roberts, to provide a health service research and health economics component to the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sheffield.

Ron's reputation as someone who was 'good at finding money and getting things done' was immediately put to the test when he was asked to write a plan and bid for funding for locating the regional Trent Institute for Health Service Research in Sheffield. Characteristically, Ron secured the funding and brought together a team of key academics who remain in ScHARR to this day, including fellow professors, John Nicholl (who joined ScHARR as part of the Medical Care Research Unit), health economist John Brazier and Alan Brennan (from the Trent Operational Research Unit).

Ron's career before ScHARR provided a solid foundation for his later work. Ron studied in London in the 1970s and graduated with a degree in economics. Post-graduate study at York led to a lecturing post at the University of Lancaster. From this, he was seconded to the Department of Health (DoH) and was involved in key developments such as the Resource Allocation Working Party formula in 1975. This influential weighted capitation formula and was intended to reduce geographical inequalities and was used in England until 1990. Ron recalled attempts to suppress the findings, presaging a similar political treatment for the influential Black report three years later.

After Ron's secondment ended in 1977, he returned to Lancaster to teach but was still

actively maintaining wider links, and was, for example, an economic adviser to the North West Regional Health Authority. In 1981, the DoH decided it needed to raise the economic literacy of its doctors and Ron was approached to see if he would take on the task of achieving this. Armed with little more than his own time and a modest budget for courses, it was not clear what was the best way to proceed. As Ron noted, "economics was as popular as mass murder at that time in the NHS" and early course were poorly attended. So, Ron approached every hospital in northern England to give him a slot on their clinical seminar programmes. Many did so. In the seminars, he intentionally "picked fights" with his audience and managed to interest enough people, to ensure that his subsequent courses

were full over the next five years. When asked to sum up the positive and negative aspects of his time in ScHARR, it is certainly the former that dominate—including being ranked first in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) for health service research, according to the influential Power Rankings. Linked to this is the tremendous increase in academic papers that ScHARR produces—where annual output was around 40-50 per year in 1997, this is now around ten

times higher, with over 400 hundred annual publications. Continually growing grant capture, excellent teaching quality embedded in new Masters programmes in Public Health, Health Economics and Decision Modelling and Health Service Research have fed Ron's admitted tendencies to megalomania. When asked about his heroes, Ron immediately cites economists David Pole at the Department of Health and Alan Williams, at the University of York, as being very influential. Their impact on Ron, personally, and for the health economics field more generally have been considerable.

Ron is due to hand over the role of Dean of ScHARR to Jon Nicholl this autumn, and feels he has been 'extraordinarily lucky' to have been able to leave ScHARR in 'as good a shape as possible for the forthcoming economic blizzard.' He is not leaving ScHARR and will continue to support Jon Nicholl initially and contribute to various activities, but the change will enable him to focus on his family and other interests, such as walking in the Lake District, and also singing as part of the folk trio Two Black Sheep and a Stallion. The trio have covered numerous songs but the most fitting may be 'The Parting Glass', which contains a lyric that seems to sum up Ron's ScHARR experiences very well: 'I spent it in good company.'



'I am quite megalomaniac!'



## Can you help?

Are you an alumni now working in an organisation that could offer a placement to a ScHARR student? If so, we would love to hear from you, to discuss the possibility of you and your organisation hosting a ScHARR student for a short-term placement. Whether you are an NGO, a hospital, or a commercial business with health care interests, we are keen for our students to gain experience working in such settings. This would raise the profile of your organisation amongst our expanding student cohort, and could provide dissertation opportunities too.

Contact: [Graham.Jones@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:Graham.Jones@sheffield.ac.uk) (+44) (0) 114 222 0771 or [Richard.cooper@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:Richard.cooper@sheffield.ac.uk)

## Busy Bula! Agatha Bula Europubhealth 2007-09

After completing her Masters degree in Public Health on the prestigious Europubhealth programme, Agatha had both good and bad experiences in relation to work. A Geneva-based United Nations HIV/AIDS job offer for her was in fact a scam designed to take her money, but Agatha returned to her native Malawi and currently works as a research operations officer at the UNC project in Lilongwe. particularly qualitative research, which she gained experience of whilst under the supervision of Dr. Paul Bissell in SchARR. In fact, she will be presenting some of the findings of this research to a national Malawian HIV/AIDS best practice conference this summer. That's not all, though, and Agatha is also looking forward to starting a PhD this autumn, with a focus on community-based interventions to promote breast feeding in HIV positive Malawian women.



## Making friends...and career

### Param Vaidya Europubhealth 2007-09

Another job success was that of Param, (seen here with Folashade Toluomole) who recalled her time both in Sheffield and Poland as being very positive: *'The teaching staff were very helpful and always guided me whenever needed. Time went very fast and I made plenty of friends, shared knowledge and learned a lot.'* Param has now gone on to work in the UK as a Public Health Co-ordinator within the NHS in Bedfordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT). In this role, which she started in January 2010, she is involved in screening

programmes, and she noted that the skills obtained from the course and SchARR all enabled her to fulfil her current work tasks perfectly.

## Still Training Rachel Weston MPH 2008-09

Rachel came to SchARR as a medical graduate to undertake the MPH as part of the NHS public health training scheme. Since graduating she has disseminated work from her MPH dissertation through local public health departments and is presenting at the Health Protection Agency Annual conference this year. Work on voluntary sector workers' perceptions of blood borne viruses in offenders in the community has continued her interest in communicable diseases and Rachel is finishing an attachment at the Sheffield health protection unit. Of SchARR she says: *"I found the MPH a valuable learning experience which has since helped me continue with professional exams. I enjoyed working alongside a variety of international students and the opportunities for networking were invaluable."* Since completing her studies, Rachel has maintained links with the SchARR and hopes to do so in the future.



## NICE end to story...

### Mousumi Biswas Europubhealth 2007-09

From an Ayurvedic medicine background in India, Mousumi secured an Erasmus Mundus grant to study at Sheffield & Poland. She is yet another SchARR alumni who has gone on to work in the public health sector in the UK. Currently working as an information analyst for Hillingdon PCT in Middlesex, Mousumi undertakes epidemiological analysis, needs assessment, analytic and information support, in clinical areas such as smoking cessation, alcohol misuse, cancer, diabetes, cervical cancer screening. She is looking forward, however, to a career change this autumn, when she will take up a new role as a technical analyst at the Centre for

Clinical Practice at the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). Recalling her time in SchARR, Mousumi *'enjoyed the excellent learning environment [and] more options to think for future professional development.'*

# ScHARR Research Showcase

A wonderfully sunny May day at the Edge in Sheffield was the setting for a presentation of the varied research activities of ScHARR. Staff and a wide range of invited guests from the NHS and other organisations listened to talks on assistive technologies, research collaborations, emergency care, and a key note address by Professor Richard Lilford (top right) on a framework for evaluations of health service policy & interventions.



# Graduation Celebration

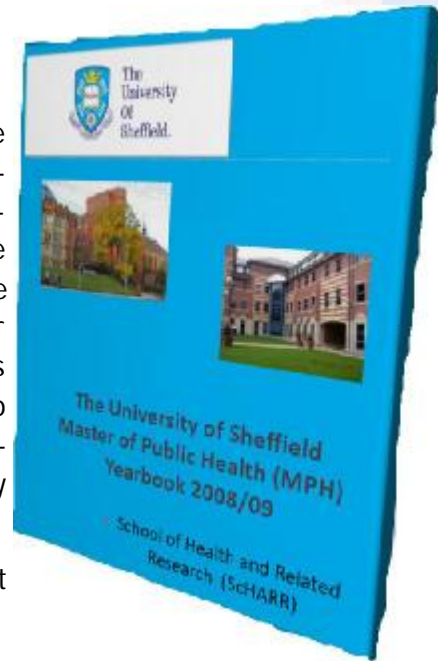
The 2009 ScHARR student cohort were back in Sheffield to graduate in January this year. As well as the formal ceremony, held this year in the Octagon Centre, ScHARR graduates were also given a formal reception at Regent Court following the official ceremonies. Many staff were also present, to celebrate the students' achievements and to wish them every success in their future careers after ScHARR. Dean Ron Akehurst made a short speech (see page 3), and several students brought family members to help celebrate the occasion with them. As Amitabh Deka and Lorena Israel show (far left), traditional hats and gowns were on display!



## Student Yearbook

To coincide with the 2010 graduation celebrations, there was also a student yearbook. This was compiled and produced thanks to the considerable efforts of MPH Management and Leadership student, **Karoline Noworyta**. The yearbook included biographies of many students from the 2008-09 cohort, together with staff profiles. Amongst other things, we found out that Professor **Mike Campbell** wants to sail around the world, student **Lorena Israel** wants to become German Health Minister and ban smoking completely, and that **Andrew Lee** has a penchant for the poetry of Robert Frost.!

If you would like a copy please contact [Richard.Cooper@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:Richard.Cooper@sheffield.ac.uk)



## ScHARR Facebook group

Want to keep in touch with ScHARR and alumni? All you need to do is add 'ScHARR TSU' as a friend on Facebook. Click on this link:

<http://www.facebook.com/ScHARR.TSU>

## Staff Artists

Ever wondered what ScHARR staff get up to when they are not working? For some, this involves expressing themselves artistically, as Professor **Nick Fox**, former director of learning and teaching and Professor **Jonathan Michaels**, director of the MSc in Clinical Research, demonstrate in their work.



**Nick Fox (right)** has been painting for many years, often using the scenery around his home in Derbyshire to inspire his choice of subjects. As this landscape of Sheldon illustrates, Nick is influenced by impressionists such as Paul Cezanne.



**Jonathan Michaels (left)**, director of the MSc in Clinical Research, combines work as a vascular surgeon, with academia and even amateur stage performances. More of his abstract work, like this alabaster sculpture, Nurture, may be found at

<http://emergingimages.co.uk/>



# Come back to ScHARR to study for a PhD



Dr Clare Relton, Dr Simon Palfreyman and Dr Basmah Al Buhairan at the Graduation Reception Jan 2010

## Ever thought about doctoral level study?

Do you have a research topic you would like to pursue, and want to gain methodological skills? ScHARR would welcome back our alumni to study for a PhD. This is what happened to public health alumni such as **Robert Akparibo**, **Mubashir Arain** and **Lucy Gell** who are currently in their first year of doctoral studies here in ScHARR. If you are interested in applying for a PhD then please contact a member of ScHARR staff who you think would make a good supervisor for you and apply using the link below. Details of fees for 2010/11 may also be found below.

Not content with being awarded an NIHR doctoral research fellowship, ScHARR research fellow **Nick Latimer**, has just completed an incredible bike journey of over 900 miles (around 1500 kilometres) from Lands End to John O'Groats in the UK. Pictured here with Simon, they raised over £4,500 for bowel cancer and haemophilia charities. Nick is feeling the effects and says he may never ride again! Well done, Nick!

## Charity bike ride for Nick



PhD Application: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/prospective\\_students/researchdegrees/apply.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/prospective_students/researchdegrees/apply.html)

Fees Information: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/prospective\\_students/researchdegrees/apply.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/scharr/prospective_students/researchdegrees/apply.html)