

Historical events

It is a great privilege to take over as President during the Society's centenary year, when we have so much to celebrate. The British Psychological Society has developed enormously in recent times. We have a large and energetic staff, organised in new directorates and headed up by our Chief Executive, Barry Brooking, who has been in office just over a year. We have offices in Leicester and London and 'seedling' offices in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our activities are set in the context of a corporate plan (available at www.bps.org.uk/about/plan.cfm) revised on a regular planning cycle, which sets out a clear vision of where we want to be in the short and medium term. I hope that the next 12 months will bring further consolidation of our organisation, and this is certainly something I will personally strive to achieve.

Raising our public profile

But an equally important ambition for my year as President focuses less on the Society, than on society at large. Our centenary slogan is 'Bringing psychology to society', and we have a truly unique opportunity to raise the profile of our discipline, and of the BPS, beyond our own membership. There has probably never been a better time to be a psychologist. There is a demand for, and acceptance of, psychology in all its varieties among the public, and the centenary gives a great excuse to broadcast our achievements to a largely receptive audience. As a result of a great deal of effort by staff and members of the Centenary Subcommittee we have many opportunities to do this.

Several of the events we have planned throughout the calendar year of 2001 are targeted at audiences beyond psychology (though we hope psychologists may enjoy them too). In this spirit, the centenary year got off to a good start on 5 January with the conference 'Psychology – A Science for Society' at the Royal Society in London. A full account of the excellent presentations was given in the March issue of *The Psychologist*. The conference was attended by representatives of many professional organisations and charities, who were generally very enthusiastic about their participation.

Later in January saw the opening of the exhibition 'Mind Your Head? 100 Years of Psychology in Britain' at the Science Museum, and the launch of the book *Psychology in Britain: Historical Essays and Personal Reflections*. These are two products of the investment that the Society has put into the history of psychology. The Society funded a post for a Fellow, Dr Geoff Bunn, to work at the Science Museum to develop the exhibition, co-edit the book (with Sandy Lovie and Graham Richards) and conduct other historical research particularly focused on the history of industrial psychology, for which another monograph is forthcoming. Dr Bunn has been given a further contract by the Science Museum as Associate Curator for Psychology – the first such post there and itself a splendid marker for the birthday year. 'Mind Your Head?' is a clever exhibition, making imaginative use of rather limited space to exemplify psychological puzzles, tools and stories as

these have been developed in the past century. The exhibition will be running for most of the rest of 2001, and we hope that many of our members will visit it.

Our historical theme continued on 22 February at a public lecture titled 'Functional localisation in the brain: From ancient to modern' given at the Royal Society by Professor Alan Cowey FRS. All tickets had been taken for this event some two weeks beforehand, and a packed lecture theatre was captivated by Professor Cowey's brilliant and entertaining account of how our understanding of the brain has developed over the centuries. A version of the talk is included for our readers on page 250. This lecture was the first of a set hosted by different national academies. It is really excellent that the BPS centenary has been granted special public lectures this year by the Royal Society, the British Academy, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Academy of Social Sciences.

Reaching psychologists

Our centenary activities are not all focused on the wider world: some are aimed much more directly at psychologists, whether or not members of the Society (we hope more will feel inspired to join us). A special centenary issue of the *British Journal of Psychology* was published in February, including some excellent reviews of topics under the broad theme of perception and cognition. We hope some of these reviews will be used widely by teachers and researchers in psychology. And then there is the Centenary Annual Conference in Glasgow which (as I write) is just about to happen. [See page 232 of this issue for news and pictures of some of the social events, and next month's issue for conference reports.]

For more about the Society's centenary see www.bps.org.uk/centenary/centenary.cfm or watch this space – I will devote much of it in future issues to bring our readers up to date with events occurring during the remaining months of the centenary year.

Vicki Bruce

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NEW SOCIETY PRESIDENT

The Society's Centenary President is Professor Vicki Bruce OBE, who took over from Tommy MacKay at the Annual Conference.

Vicki has been Professor of Psychology at the University of Stirling since 1992. She read natural sciences at Cambridge, where she also completed her PhD in psychology in 1977. She spent 14 years at the University of Nottingham before moving to her current post.

Her research field is the perception and recognition of faces, and she has published widely on this topic. Vicki has also been heavily involved with research administration, as a former member of several committees of the Medical Research Council and of the Economic and Social Research Council, and as Chair of the psychology panel for the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise. She is also a member of the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and of the UK Council for Science and Technology.

Vicki was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 1999 and joined the Academy's Council in 2000. She received an OBE for services to psychology in 1997.

LEARNING DISABILITIES WHITE PAPER

ON 20 March the Department of Health published its planned programme of action in *Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century*, the first White Paper on learning disability for 30 years. See the DoH website (www.doh.gov.uk/learningdisabilities/new.htm) for more information and links to other relevant sites.

EXPERT WITNESS DIRECTOR

A LEADING legal publisher in Scotland will be producing *The Law Society of Scotland Directory of Expert Witnesses 2002* this autumn. Published with the full endorsement of the Law Society of Scotland, this new directory will be an important new way for professionals to promote their expert witness services to the entire Scottish legal profession. To take out an entry contact Peter Chare, Scottish Expert Witness Directory, Directories Unit, FREEPOST (KE1970), 100 Avenue Road London NW3 1YR. Tel: 020 7393 7798; e-mail: experts@wgreen.co.uk.

SAMARITANS WEEK

'IMAGINE a world without The Samaritans' will be the theme of The Samaritans' Week 2001, running 19–26 May 2001. Throughout the week, local and national events will be taking place to raise awareness, and volunteers will be getting involved in local community events to raise money for the nationwide service.

DEADLINE

We welcome news items from members for possible publication; deadline for the July issue is **1 June**

New anxiety and trauma centre

ON 4 April Princess Anne came to the Institute of Psychiatry in London to open the Henry Wellcome Building for Psychology.

The new building will provide a specialist home for the Anxiety Disorders and Trauma Group led by Professors David Clark, Anke Ehlers and Paul Salkovskis. It was largely funded by a Joint Infrastructure Fund award from the Wellcome Trust.

On the morning of the opening there was a series of talks from leading speakers on aspects of cognitive behaviour therapy. After lunch the princess arrived for the official opening and to tour the new facilities.

The nearby Centre for Anxiety Disorders and Trauma, also opened by Princess Anne, aims to improve NHS care for people who suffer from problems such as post-traumatic stress, social phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder and panic disorder. It is led by a world-class team of psychologists who have joined the Institute from the University of Oxford. They have developed powerful specialised treatment programmes for anxiety disorders using



Professor Arthur Lucas (Principal of King's College London), Princess Anne and Baroness Rawlings (Chair of the College Council)

cognitive behaviour therapy, which have proved to be significantly more effective than medication and other standard forms of treatment.

As well as providing NHS care for patients, the centre will undertake research into the causes and most effective treatment of anxiety disorders. The team is also looking to improve the availability of treatment by developing training programmes for health professionals.

'With cognitive behaviour therapy, once you get better you stay better,' said Professor David Clark, head of the centre. 'This is a vast improvement on

medication, for example, where many people often relapse after their treatment programme finishes.'

The centre has been developed with funding from the Wellcome Trust research charity, the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London and the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.

Professor Clark added: 'Making this treatment more widely available will make a vast difference to many people's lives. We also believe that more widespread use of CBT could reduce the cost to the NHS of treating anxiety disorders by as much as 90 per cent.'

Citations index on the web

THE American Psychological Association has announced an agreement to provide psychology references and abstracts over the internet in collaboration with a major scientific publishing house.

ScienceDirect (www.sciencedirect.com), a division of Elsevier Science, has been chosen by the APA to distribute PsycINFO, part of the APA's scholarly publishing programme. PsycINFO is the leading bibliographic/abstracts database in psychology. It contains more than 1.7 million references to psychological literature from 1887 to the present, including journal articles, books,

book chapters, technical reports, and dissertations published worldwide.

Integrating the abstracts database with the full-text article collection on ScienceDirect, together with links to the journal collections of publishers via CrossRef, will provide a comprehensive reference source to the field of psychology.

'This new alliance with ScienceDirect pleases APA because it expands our global reach and it offers another choice of access to our customers: an option with the functionalities and linkages they are seeking,' said Linda Beebe, Senior Director of PsycINFO.

Portraits in mind

THIS year for the first time psychologists will take their place in the science rooms of the National Portrait Gallery, in an exhibition running from 9 May to 27 August.

The display of photographs (drawn from the collections of the National Portrait Gallery, The British Psychological Society and a number of private and institutional lenders) highlights some of the individuals who have made, and are making, the history of the discipline of psychology.

Among the wide range of eminent psychologists of the past are George Combe, the Edinburgh phrenologist, photographed by the pioneering photographers Hill and Adamson in the 1840s. Beatrice Edgell, a teacher of psychology and researcher at the turn of the last century and the first woman President of the Society, is

portrayed in a photograph that only recently came to light at Royal Holloway College.

W.H.R. Rivers, now known to a wide public for his work on war neuroses through the novels of Pat Barker, is there.

Two distinguished child psychologists, Margaret Lowenfeld and John Bowlby, bring the selection into the mid-20th century.

In celebration of its centenary, the Society has also commissioned the photographer Louise Bobbé to take a series of six photographs of its most recent award winners. Most of her photographs are taken in locations relevant to the sitters' work; the group jointly recognised for their distinguished contribution to professional psychology was photographed on the steps of University College London, where the Society had its origin.

PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES

Associated with the portrait exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery is a series of public lectures. All lectures will take place on Thursdays at 1.10pm in the Ondaatje Wing Theatre.

7 June 'The face in mind' – Vicki Bruce, University of Stirling, discusses the work of George Combe, Francis Galton and David Perrett.

14 June 'Beatrice Edgell – The pioneer woman' – Elizabeth Valentine, Royal Holloway, University of London

21 June 'How are we all different?' – Jeffrey Gray, Institute of Psychiatry, talks about the work of Godfrey Thompson, J.C. Raven and H.J. Eysenck.

5 July 'From Torres Straits to the trenches: C.S. Myer, W.H.R. Rivers and the organisation of psychology in Britain' – Geoff Bunn, Associate Curator of Psychology, Science Museum

12 July 'Children – Tough and tender' – Ann Phoenix, Open University, discusses the work of Cyril Burt, Susan Isaacs, Margaret Lowenfeld and Jack Tizard

19 July 'Studying the brain' – Barbara Wilson, Medical Research Council, discusses her own work

26 July 'Playing roles for the camera: Virginia Woolf' – Halla Beloff, University of Derby

Lectures are free, but tickets will be needed. Apply in person to the ticket desk or send an s.a.e. to Psychology Lectures, Education Department, National Portrait Gallery, St Martins Lane, London, WC2H 0HE. No tickets will be issued before 9 May. No more than four tickets for each lecture per application.

Crisis? What crisis?

NICK PIDGEON on public perception of risk in relation to recent events.

FOOT-and-mouth disease, BSE, nuclear radiation, release of sexual offenders, GM food safety, railways.

Wherever you turn, risk and the way people respond to and perceive risk has reached the very top of the public policy agenda. And this is at a time when most of us live longer and far healthier lives than ever before.

On the surface at least, responses to hazards present some startling contradictions. For example, people may be apparently unconcerned by some very serious public health problems (alcohol, smoking), while other hazards that appear to pose comparatively low risk according to scientific experts (some applications of plant genetics research) are the focus of considerable controversy and concern.

As with most socially contested issues though, things are not as simple as they might at first seem. While the public is

often portrayed by the media and politicians as demanding zero risk, this is rarely if ever the case – most of us are perfectly prepared to drive a car, despite the very real evidence of over 3000 deaths on UK roads every year. Nor is a knowledge deficit to blame here, as evidence from two decades of psychological research on risk perception (Pidgeon & Beattie, 1998; Slovic, 2000) – some conducted under the ESRC's risk and human behaviour research programme – shows us quite clearly that people have a very good grasp of what is likely to kill them tomorrow.

However, when asked to judge what is 'risky' or 'acceptable', people draw many other factors into the equation. For example, risks are seen as less acceptable or in need of more attention if they are difficult to control personally or hold high catastrophic potential (as with flying), or are imposed upon people without their consent. Furthermore, some activities (such as nuclear energy generation) bring benefits from current production but impose risks on future people from their long-lived waste products. Other current activities, such as road transportation and fossil fuel energy generation, impose the rather different future risks of climate change. Both, in different ways, raise difficult policy dilemmas of equity between generations which are difficult to resolve by science alone (Okrent & Pidgeon, 2000).

Developments in new technology (e.g. human genomics research) appear a particular focus of societal concern at present. Here one can ask whether the risks are in any sense currently knowable? From studies of past technological catastrophes and disasters we know that the statistical assessment of risk is very difficult for many of the controversial issues that stretch far into the future or for which we have little past experience. Accordingly, scientific knowledge of new technologies may be fraught with profound structural uncertainty (very different from the more familiar statistical risk), perhaps hidden until the technology is developed, by which time it may be too late to prevent unforeseen consequences.

Under such circumstances lay-logics of risk may have more rationality to them than first meets the eye. The message here for many scientists (some psychologists amongst them; see Plomin, 2001) is that it is simply naive to postulate that we can easily predict, measure or manage such risks. Rather a modicum of caution (i.e. the precautionary principle) is needed to temper the potential effects of unbridled technological innovation.

Work on the social psychology of risk has highlighted a further important aspect that is driving concerns – distrust in risk-managing institutions. Reading the many risk stories that constantly appear across all sections of the media one could hardly

disagree. In the UK and Europe trust questions have been central to the debate about BSE, and more recently have spilled into beliefs about the safety of genetically modified foodstuffs, and most likely now the debate about foot and mouth disease and the government handling of it.

Trust is important for a number of reasons, not least because it will impact on the many 'risk communications' we daily receive. Most obviously, results from persuasive-communication research show us that if we do not trust the messenger we may not believe the message. And institutional trust (accorded to governments or business) may be lost following a serious incident or disaster, particularly if systemic faults or less than full efforts to learn the lessons are suspected. At the University of East Anglia and Newcastle University work recently completed for the Health and Safety Executive clearly demonstrates the impact of the Ladbroke Grove railway accident in 1999 – and the ensuing media amplification of public risk discourse – on perceptions of railway safety and trust in its management in the UK. After Ladbroke Grove people readily connect the accident with other railway incidents, with the poor state of the UK railways generally, and concerns about the

safety consequences of rail privatisation, in ways that were not present in public discourse prior to 1999.

Some sociologists would go so far as to argue that many present anxieties are at root driven by our dependence on globalised and remote systems of technological expertise – with the politics of distrust replacing more traditional forms of social mobilisation (such as membership of unions, or political parties of all hues) as a defining feature of a modern 'risk society'. Taken with many of the above considerations, this implies that to

understand understandings of risk, we need to go beyond simple one-way efforts to improve public understanding of technology or science. Scientists need to understand the public as much as the public needs to understand science.

In particular, mapping the future path of the more socially conflicted risk questions (such as human genetics research and its development) may require novel forms of analytic/deliberative process in order to evaluate the acceptability of technological innovation. That is, citizen participation in an open interrogation of the basic science of the matter, in ways that acknowledge people's values and beliefs about risk and trust too. Developing and evaluating such novel forms of participation will involve psychology, alongside many other disciplines, in an exciting research agenda over the coming 10 years.

■ *Professor Nick Pidgeon is at the interdisciplinary School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia. He is Director of the Centre for Environmental Risk, and Director of a new major Leverhulme Trust funded research programme (2001–2005) on understanding risk. See www.uea.ac.uk/env/cer or e-mail risk@uea.ac.uk for information.*

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At the Centenary Conference

THE Centenary Conference at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow was the biggest psychology conference ever held in the UK, with over 2300 delegates registered. The various career, public and social events provided many opportunities to fulfil the centenary slogan of 'Bringing psychology to society'.

On the first day of the conference a careers fair

organised by Scottish Branch representatives Rory O'Connor and Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon drew about 250 students and schoolchildren to the SECC for talks from professional psychologists in various fields. They heard about the qualifications needed to follow different psychology careers, and representatives of Scottish universities were there with information on courses.

The Scottish Branch also organised a 'psychology bus' to stand in Buchanan Street,



Tommy MacKay ad dressing the ha ggs

that it shall no longer be used for banners.

Before giving his Presidential Address on the first day of the conference, the outgoing President, Tommy MacKay, received an honorary doctorate from the University of Glasgow. This was in recognition of his contribution to educational research and policy over the last 30 years. 'I was quite overwhelmed,' Tommy said, 'especially to receive such a high honour from the university where

attracting a couple of hundred people for careers advice and information about what psychologists do. Many more saw the bus, raising the profile of British psychology.

The Society also publicised its presence to the rest of the city by hanging a gigantic banner from the Finnieston Crane. The blue and white banner, 45ft wide and 15ft high, was slung from the crane by steeplejacks on the Monday and remained there (despite the elements) until it was removed slightly prematurely on the Friday after a change of ownership of the crane. We have, however, made history, as the new owners are adamant



The Society hosted Radio 4's *Any Questions?*



After dinner – more chips



I studied in my own native city.'

On Thursday the Lord Provost of Glasgow unveiled a commemorative plaque, which will remain mounted at the SECC. Centenary President Vicki Bruce said: 'We are pleased to leave a permanent reminder of our presence in Glasgow during our centenary year, and we are grateful to the SECC for hosting our conference and displaying the plaque.'

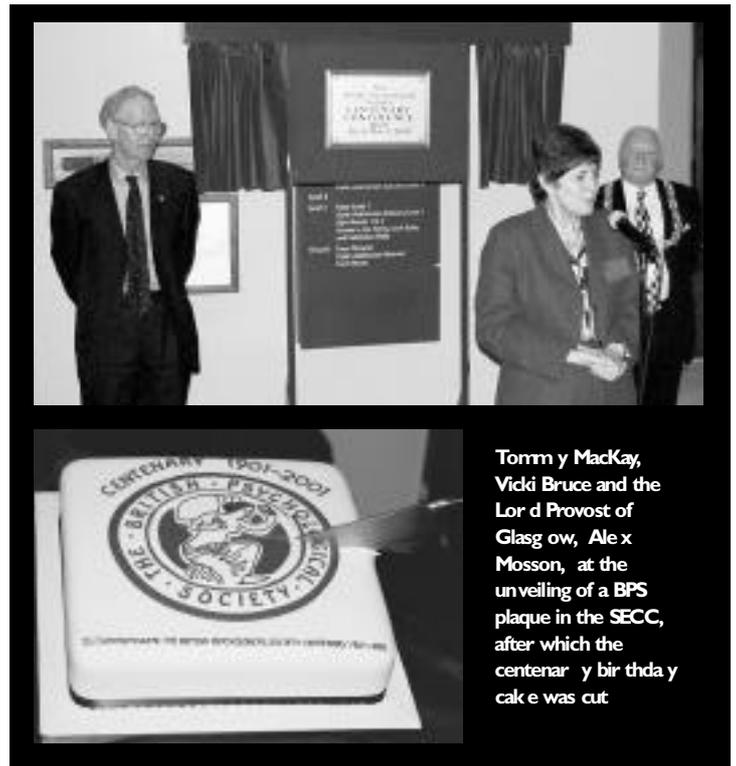
The Society hosted the Radio 4 programme *Any Questions?* on Friday. About 450 guests turned up to grill the panel, which comprised Alistair Darling (Secretary of State for Social Security), Sir Malcolm Rifkind (former Defence

Secretary and Foreign Secretary), Alan Beith (deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats) and John Swinney (leader of the Scottish National Party). The usual jokes about close scrutiny of body language were countered with questions from the audience about the actual potential role of psychology in society. The event will surely have boosted awareness of the BPS among the millions of listeners.

Evenings saw a busy social programme. Wednesday's 'Taste of Scotland' dinner was preceded by a traditional and enthusiastic 'addressing of the haggis' by Tommy MacKay. The excellent food was followed by a ceilidh. Thursday was celebration disco night,



Dr MacKay with his wife Sue and son Neil after the presentation of his honorary doctorate



Tommy MacKay, Vicki Bruce and the Lord Provost of Glasgow, Alex Mosson, at the unveiling of a BPS plaque in the SECC, after which the centenary birthday cake was cut

and Friday had a jazz band and a second disco. On the final night there was an impressive sponsored fireworks display over the River Clyde, followed by a casino and a band.

See the June and July issues of *The Psychologist* for reports of talks from the conference.



Various commemorative centenary gifts were sold at the conference, and are still available to purchase. So order your Society items now: mousemats (£2.50), bone china mugs (£4), earthenware mugs (£2.50), stainless steel keyrings (£1.50), crystal paperweights (£12.50), commemorative plaques (£25) and leather bookmarks (£1). All items subject to postage & packing.

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