

# IC Reporter

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Imperial  
College

STAFF NEWSPAPER OF IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE



## Girls GETSET for careers in science and engineering

“Fab!”, “Imperial’s very big” and “the challenge was great” were some of the comments received from girls attending the recent GETSET (Girls Entering Tomorrow’s Science, Engineering and Technology) event at IC.

GETSET aims to encourage girls to consider careers in science, technology and engineering prior to their selection of GCSE options.

The theme of this year’s event was staging the pantomime *Cinderella* following the walkout of a production team. This scenario enabled the girls to tackle a variety of challenges based on the four project areas of design, chemistry, mechanical and electrical engineering.

The girls worked in teams carrying out tasks such as building *Cinderella*’s coach or designing her dress, with each team being assigned female mentors who were

either academics or in industry. Also present at the event were TV personalities Johnny Ball and Kate Bellingham.

This is the second year GETSET, a part of National Science Week, has been held at Imperial and judging from the feedback received from the 200 girls aged 13–14 who took part, it was a resounding success.

The two-day event was organised by Schools Liaison with support from Public Relations.

## Imperial students score high in top flight scheme

Imperial College has been awarded 264 Top Flight Bursary Awards for 1994–95. This number is second only to Cambridge University (with 331) and means IC students will share £132,000 this session.

The scheme offers a scholarship of £500 a year to students entering their first year of an accredited engineering course with grades AAB at A level (or an equivalent qualification). They must also meet certain residential requirements.

The Government introduced the awards for the first time this year to attract bright and talented young people into engineering. The scheme will still be in place for students arriving at College in 1995 and 1996.

The Registry ensured maximum publicity around the College to enable all eligible students to apply for the bursary. The greatest number of awards (68) was given to Mechanical Engineering students.

Other students who received awards are in the following departments:

Electrical Engineering (48), Computing (42), Aeronautics (33), Chemical Engineering (31), Civil Engineering (26), Materials (2) and Mineral Resources Engineering (1).

## IN BRIEF

### 25 years of computing

The Department of Computing was founded 25 years ago. As part of the celebrations to mark this anniversary the Department is holding an Open Day on Wednesday 17 May 1995. The programme aims to show the enormous growth and change in the Department’s research profile over the last 25 years and to describe some of the new and exciting developments.

Further details from Dr Teresa Sergot, extension 48355.

### Barton receives Priestley Medal

On 4 April Sir Derek Barton was awarded the 1995 Priestley Medal, the highest award of the American Chemical Society, in a ceremony in Anaheim, California. Sir Derek, who won the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1969, taught at Imperial College from 1957 until 1977. He now teaches at Texas A&M University.

### Science writing rewarded

John Emsley’s book *The Consumers’ Good Chemical Guide* has been shortlisted for the 1995 Rhone-Poulenc Prize for science books. John Emsley is the science writer-in-residence at Imperial. The prize, worth £10,000, will be awarded on 24 May at the Science Museum. *The Consumers’ Good Chemical Guide* was reviewed in IC Reporter (issue 4).

### Dean chosen as council member

Professor Julia Higgins, Dean of the City and Guilds College, has been chosen as one of the first members of the new Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils. The Council is responsible for the Daresbury and Rutherford Appleton Laboratories.

### Albertopolis bid

The South Kensington Consortium submitted its bid for the Albertopolis project to the Millennium Commission on 28 April. The Commission will announce its shortlisted projects in June.

## Engineering students accept kit car challenge

Six Imperial engineering students forgot about looming exams recently to build a kit car in the *Top Gear* Westfield Challenge.

The BBC programme *Top Gear*, the most popular car programme on television, organised a feature with four teams building Westfield kit cars in a head-to-head competition.

The Imperial College team was pitted against a team of ‘Back Street Garage Boys’; the successful Ford Motorsport/Andy Rouse, British touring car championship team; and a team made up of *Top Gear* presenters Jeremy Clarkson and Tiff Needell, and other *Top Gear* staff.

The challenge was to build a Westfield Kit Car (0–60 mph in 5.5 seconds, top speed 120mph) from hundreds of individual components and complete one lap of Brands Hatch race circuit.

The students showed great initiative in visiting the Westfield factory the day before the event. Under the guise of a potential purchase they obtained build diagrams and instructions, and planned a strategy.

The team finished third with a build time of three-and-a-half hours, managing to vanquish the *Top Gear* presenters. The professional ‘petrol heads’ from Ford emerged as victors, with a time of two hours and ten minutes and the Back Street Garage Boys took second place.

Team leader Simon Ransom said of Imperial’s performance: “For the first hour we were neck and neck with the Garage Boys – unfortunately we had a problem with our brakes which cost us at least half an hour.”

*The Westfield Challenge will feature in Top Gear magazine and will be shown on Top Gear on Thursday 11 May (BBC2, 20.30 hours).*



IC’s team members were Simon Ransom, Sarah Wingrove, Jan Graham, Matthew Chorlton and Hans Rutlin from the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Graem Corfield from the Department of Chemical Engineering and Chemical Technology.

## Media mentions

### Multi-million pound business success for alumnus

An entrepreneurial alumnus was profiled in a recent issue of *Computer Weekly* (20 April). Laurence Holt, who graduated from the Department of Computing with a first class degree, founded a company called Quidnunc which specialises in software development. Originally a one-man business run from a sitting room, Quidnunc now has 30 employees, a blue chip client base and an annual turnover of over £2 million.

### Dangers of being a big bird

Dr Tim Blackburn, Department of Biology, had some recent research on the extinction of birds reviewed in *The Guardian* (6 April). He advances the theory that larger, heavier birds are more likely to become extinct than smaller species. The research, carried out in conjunction with Kevin Gaston of the Natural History Museum, concludes that being big is perilous, possibly because bigger birds have smaller populations and breed more slowly than their small-bodied cousins.

### Chemist doubts link between global warming and CO<sub>2</sub>

Dr Jack Barrett was interviewed in the science pages of *The Times* (17 April) when he cast doubt on the truth of man-made global warming. Dr Barrett, Department of Chemistry, remains unconvinced that carbon dioxide is the principal villain. He argues that the first 100 feet of the atmosphere already contains enough carbon dioxide to absorb virtually all the radiation emitted by the Earth in the infrared: adding any more cannot increase the amount absorbed.

### Sucking minerals from the sea

Dr David Cronan, Geology, was interviewed on the John Dunn programme, BBC Radio 2, on 3 April about deep sea mineral resources. He discussed how minerals could be mined using a large suction device, as well as some of the environmental problems that might arise from this.

### IC professor named president

*The Times* (12 April) reported the election of Tony Ridley, professor of transport engineering, Civil Engineering, as the 131st president of the Institution of Civil Engineers. This follows the sudden death of former president Edmund Hambly. Professor Ridley will serve a 19-month term until 5 November 1996.

### New safety design for ferries

Dr Ceril Laming, Mechanical Engineering, had a letter to *The Times* printed on 24 April. The letter, concerning the safety of roll-on, roll-off ferries, suggested division of decks by longitudinal barriers and draining to reduce the impact of water entering a damaged ship. Dr Laming asserted that other measures to improve safety, such as alarms and closed-circuit television, did not confront intrinsic design weaknesses of ro-ro ferries directly enough.

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

### Improving drainage for developing countries

“Imagine yourself living in a one-room shack with eight other people. Imagine the mud everywhere, running in sludgy heaps between the shacks.

“The latrine at the end of the lane is so filthy that waste is pouring into the lane. Even the open drains are clogged with garbage, excreta, and other filth.” According to Dr David Butler, Department of Civil Engineering, this is the grim reality for millions of people in the developing world. David Butler, along with Peter Kolsky (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), is working on an Overseas Development Administration-funded project in India to evaluate the performance of surface drainage systems in low-income communities.

Having used sophisticated monitoring equipment and computing techniques to assess the situation, David and Peter hope to suggest affordable, sustainable ways of improving the performance of new or existing drainage systems.



Simple techniques to reduce blockage and frequent flooding might include better solid waste collection and street cleaning practices. Drainage design and construction can also be improved merely by taking account of good hydraulic engineering practice. “Good drainage is more than a sound economic investment in urban infrastructure; it is a vital part of the struggle for urban public health,” says David.

‘Improved’ Indian slum, pictured above, still shows insanitary conditions.

## The view from the tower by Don

“Spring is here, the birds are in full song, thoughts of doing a bit of research come to mind. But wait! The old brain is suppressing something, something dark and unpleasant. I’ve forgotten all about examinations! Spring, birds and research vanish. The mind darkens with thoughts of hours of reading and marking stuff I don’t want to read, written by students who don’t want to write it. People become dons because they enjoy teaching and (sometimes or) research. But it would take perversity of an unqualified measure for anyone to say that they enjoy marking. For students too, exam time is only rarely enjoyable – often it is a time of anxiety and sometimes a time of fear and desperation. Could this state of affairs be changed?”

I ask the question not because I have a brilliant answer, but because the question may often be thought and less often uttered. It seems almost heresy to suggest that there may be alternatives some of which are obvious; greater use of oral examinations, for example. As I utter this thought the objections ring in my ears – too subjective, time consuming, hard to standardise, disadvantages the shy person, etc.

I have taken part in oral examinations in other parts of Europe. Such objections would never have been raised. Indeed, orals probably take less time than written papers both for students and staff and have the great advantage of the knowledge gained through human contact. Of course, much has to do with what one is used to, but this

should not inhibit a broad discussion. After all, the object of the task is clear: to find out whether students know what they are supposed to have learned and award a grade on a scale that need not be more accurate than one in five. Marks such as 73.2% we all know are over-accurate and discussions about putting border lines between, say, 73.2% and 72.5% are just bizarre.

As another alternative, information technology could come into the picture – I say not how, but it points to scope for the use of imagination. I once visited a US university where in some subjects students were allowed to grade themselves. If the faculty agreed with the grading, the grade would stand. If they disagreed, the student would proceed to an exam. Unfortunately, students were only too ready to flunk themselves.

So from my perch on the tower, I look down into the Sherfield office of the Pro-Rector (Teaching Quality). I know that, for excitement, he has asked us to experiment with double blind marking. This may be quite interesting within the present system, but sadly, it doubles the dubious pleasure of pouring over scripts. So for even greater excitement, might the Pro-Rector encourage some experimentation, or even just debate, on making the examination process more fun? This need not mean less accuracy or fairness – puritanism makes fun seem irresponsible. Precisely the opposite could be true.”

## Union Adviser urges awareness of problems facing students

It is evident from the number of students using the Union advice service that students’ financial hardship continues to increase, say the Union advice team, Minever Kavlak and J Cummins.

“The budget at the end of 1994 was not good news for students,” Minever continued. “All in all, funding for higher education will be cut by £25 million in each of the next two academic years. And IC students are not immune to these changes.”

They hope to promote staff awareness of the money problems facing some students, especially during the summer term. “Exam time must be the most stressful part of the year for many students. Those with existing financial difficulties may be under considerable pressure.”

College staff can help by being aware of these problems and referring any students suffering stress to people who may be able to help, such as Minever Kavlak and J Cummins, the Student Counsellor or the College Tutors.

## CHARITY EVENTS

### Just bin it

Abigail Adams, an MSc student, is organising an aluminium can recycling scheme within the College. The proceeds will be donated to the UK charity, Raleigh International.

In October Abigail will be embarking on three months’ voluntary work in Guyana, South America with the charity. She and other volunteers will work with government agencies to access remote Amerindian communities. They will assist with immunisation programmes, nutrition and health surveys and malarial screening.

Working alongside the Forestry Commission staff at Moraballi Forest Reserve they will help with survey work. By cutting and remarking the reserve boundary this ecologically important area of Guyana – home to a wide variety of wildlife – will be protected from poachers.

As a charity, Raleigh asks each volunteer to raise £2,950 to fund these and other projects. Therefore, during the coming hot and thirsty months please collect your aluminium cans and place them in the special bins dotted around the College. Each can recycled is making a significant contribution to charity.

### Mountain walk to help cystic fibrosis sufferers

Jane Thompson and Anne Kemp are planning a 20-mile sponsored walk up Ben Nevis, on behalf of cystic fibrosis sufferers.

They have purchased new walking boots and are currently breaking them in before the big day on 30 June. Many of you will know that St Mary’s are doing extensive research into this genetic disease so fund raising by IC employees is particularly apt.

They would like to raise as much money as possible. If you would like to contribute please contact Susan or Karen on extensions 49539 or 49509. They would be delighted to assist you with information on how to pledge your money in advance of the walk.

Details of how they fared and how much sponsorship was raised by Imperial will be hitting the IC Reporter headlines at a later date.

Jane Thompson is a Business Accountant in the Finance Division and Anne Kemp is the Conference Manager.

## BOOK REVIEW

## Eco-babble explained

Review by John Emsley

*Chemistry in Your Environment*  
Jack Barrett 1994  
Albion Publishing  
£16.50 hbk, £9.95 pbk

Although you might wish it were otherwise, it is chemistry that controls the world in which we live. We must really understand this science if we are to discuss pollution, climate change, fertilisers, drugs, and renewable resources. The media endlessly report these controversies, but how many of us understand enough chemistry to evaluate what we are being told? I suspect very few. Which is why *Chemistry in Your Environment* by Dr Jack Barrett is so welcome.

Read this book and you will realise why chemists regard so much 'news' as mere eco-babble. Barrett not only explains in chemical terms the key issues of the day, but he explains the chemistry as well. Barrett describes his book as 'user-friendly, simplified science' and I agree. And to demonstrate this, he begins by describing a typical evening in a suburban home, then interprets it in chemical terms.

From here he launches into the basic chemical concepts of mole-

cules, acids, oxidation, radioactivity, light and colour, that we need if we are to make sense of what follows - topics as large as the atmosphere and as small as trace elements in our bodies. Along the way Barrett covers metal resources, fossil fuels, glass, paper, pharmaceuticals and food.

What I suspect will cause most surprise is the chapter on the atmosphere. Here we take a refreshing cold plunge of common sense as a corrective to greenhouse fever. Read this and you will understand what chemists have known all along; that more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere cannot cause more global warming on Earth. Phew!

This is a super book which I thoroughly recommend. It is not surprising that pundits in the media often get things wrong because so many of them are seriously chemically challenged. If you want to avoid this mind-threatening condition then I suggest you take a large dose of *Chemistry in Your Environment*.

John Emsley is the College's science writer-in-residence

## IC Trust funds student performer



The IC Trust has decided to pay the fees of £595 to support the involvement of Marlain Angelides, Biochemistry II, at the 1995 Edinburgh Festival in the

National Youth Music Theatre (NYMT) production of *Annie*.

Marlain has been involved in drama since the age of seven and has been acting in amateur productions ever since. Whilst at Imperial she has participated in

## Challenge and opportunity

Professor John Caldwell looks at the approaching medical mergers and the new Imperial College School of Medicine

**T**he need for radical change in medical education in London has been under discussion since the time of the Todd Report in the late 1960s and pressures have intensified in recent years, latterly in the aftermath of the Tomlinson Report.

It is against this background that we must view the impending arrival of medicine into the heart of Imperial. The biological sciences are the sciences of the twenty first century and the clinical perspective will be essential for Imperial College to retain and extend its place as a world class institution.

The formation of the Imperial College School of Medicine (ICSM) presents the challenge of merging together proud and independent institutions, each redolent with its own traditions, into a new medical school retaining these strengths and combining scientific, technological and medical expertise in clinical teaching and research.

There are many people at St Mary's and the merging institutions (National Heart and Lung Institute, the Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School and the Royal Postgraduate Medical School) prepared to take on this task, under the leadership of the soon-to-be-appointed first Principal of ICSM. Aside from the many issues raised by academic mergers, the new medical school will have complex relationships with the National Health Service Hospital Trusts which it will rely



John Caldwell

on for clinical teaching and research facilities.

We are now tantalisingly close to finalising funding arrangements for the new Biology and Basic Medical Sciences Building which, filling the space on the south side of the Queen's Lawn between RCS I and Chemistry II, will be the most tangible evidence of ICSM for most people working at South Kensington. This will provide a superior home for Biology and direct links with its most important collaborating departments. It will provide a teaching and research environment of the highest possible quality which reflects the place of biomedical science within the science and technology community of the coming century.

The new building will be a major aspect of the desired bio-

medical focus of the College. It will also enable ICSM to develop close teaching and research relationships with the science and engineering departments on campus, in addition to the pre-existing essential links with the teaching hospitals.

The MB BS course will run for almost six years with a student intake of over 250 per year. While details of the new curriculum remain to be finalised, the students will spend about three years in the new building. The life of the medical student is traditionally a rich one and this student body will bring a great deal to the academic, social and sporting life of Imperial College. It is essential that value be added to the education of science, engineering and medical students by maximising their interactions within the multi-faculty environment of IC as a whole.

The hymn writer H.F. Lyte took a negative view when he wrote 'Change and decay in all around I see'. We are going through a period of unprecedented change in London medicine, which many people are already finding uncomfortable and unsettling. But standing still is never an option and change presents once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. We can direct the future development of medicine within IC towards a clear goal of using the best of modern scholarship to the benefit of human health.

John Caldwell is Professor of Biochemical Toxicology and Deputy Dean at St Mary's Hospital Medical School

## Chemistry appeal aims to boost competitive position

**“Just as physics underpinned the electronic revolution of the twentieth century, so chemistry is the foundation for the life-science revolution of the twenty-first.” So claims Julian Walsh, alumnus of the Department of Chemistry and manager of its 150th Anniversary Appeal.**

This year heralds the 150th anniversary of the Royal College of Chemistry - the forerunner of the Royal College of Science and one of the founding colleges of Imperial College.

To celebrate, the Department of Chemistry has launched a massive effort to increase industrial partnership, aiming to collect £20 million by the end of the decade.

The Department has already had considerable success in raising corporate sponsorship. Later this year, it will inaugurate the Zeneca/SmithKline Beecham Centre for Analytical Chemistry, which will

complement the new Wolfson Research Laboratories.

According to Julian, the Department would like to expand its capabilities in combinatorial chemistry, semiconductor work, and catalysis.

Another possibility is inter-departmental initiatives, such as a new biomolecular research institute in conjunction with the Department of Biochemistry, and a renewed emphasis on polymers in conjunction with the Department of Chemical Engineering.

“The Department has been going through a period of great renewal in the past five years in terms of new staff,” said Professor David Phillips, Head of the Department of Chemistry.

“We hope the appeal will give these outstanding young people the kind of laboratories, equipment and research personnel they deserve, and take us back into a truly internationally competitive position.”

*Divorce me Darling* with Imperial Opera and played lead roles in *Chicago* and *Pirates of Penzance* with Imperial College Operatic Society, which she now chairs. Marlain also choreographed and played Sally Bowles (pictured left) in this year's Opso production of *Cabaret*.

Outside College she played Roxie Hart in the Theatre West Four production of *Chicago* for which she received a nomination for Best Actor from the Hounslow Council of Arts.

The route to a part in *Annie* was not an easy one. The first audition involved two hours of singing, dancing and acting auditions and she was called back in December last year when she spent an entire day learning dances, reading and improvising lines. She was eventually selected for a company of 39 from over 3,000 hopefuls across Great Britain. About her selection Marlain said: “I am nineteen years old which is the maximum age allowed to be a member of the NYMT so it is my last chance to be part of something so wonderful. This is a once in a lifetime experience and certainly a small break for me as a performer.”

The company will rehearse and perform for a month at the Edinburgh Festival in August.

## D I A R Y

## May

## COLLEGE EVENTS

**Thursday 25 May***Networking reception*

'Meeting the challenge of science communication'. John Durant, Professor of Public Understanding of Science. To be held in the Clore Lecture Theatre (Huxley 213) at 18.00 hours. Tickets (£9.00 to IC staff, including buffet) and further information from room 301, Sherfield Building, extension 46134.

## EXHIBITIONS

**28 May - 3 September***T.H. Huxley Esquire, scientist, artist and educator*

To be held in the Science Museum picture gallery.

## LECTURES

**Monday 15 May***Lecture given by the Rector*

'The College in the changed environment of UK higher education'. Sir Ronald Oxburgh, Rector. To be held in the Clore lecture theatre at 16.30 hours. All members of the College are welcome.

**Tuesday 16 May***Almroth Wright lecture*

'Control of cell growth and cell death by oncogenes'. Professor Gerard Evan, Imperial Cancer Research Fund. To be held in the Almroth Wright lecture theatre, Wright Fleming Institute at 17.00 hours.

**Tuesday 16 May***Inaugural lecture*

'Camels, horses and committees:

how are design and function related?' Professor Robert Schroter. To be held in the Clore lecture theatre (Huxley 213) at 17.30 hours.

**Tuesday 23 May***Almroth Wright lecture*

'Gastric lymphoma: infection, neoplasm or both?'. Professor Peter Isaacson, University College, London. To be held in the Almroth Wright lecture theatre, Wright Fleming Institute at 17.00 hours.

**Wednesday 24 May***Inaugural lecture*

'The private life of polynomials'. Eduardo Ortiz, Professor of Mathematics. To be held in the Clore lecture theatre (Huxley 213) at 17.30 hours.

**Tuesday 30 May***Almroth Wright lecture*

'How p53 stops cancer'. Professor David Lane, Medical Sciences Institute. To be held in the Almroth Wright lecture theatre, Wright Fleming Institute at 17.00 hours.

## June

## COLLEGE EVENTS

**Wednesday 7 June***ICCET symposium on the environment and health*

To be held in the Clore lecture theatre (Huxley 213), all day. Further information from Diana Paterson-Fox, extension 49274 or e-mail d.pfox

**Wednesday 14 June***Imperial College Environment Day*

The day will consist of a series of presentations, an exhibition and the launch of the environment brochure. Further information from the Graduate School of the Environment, extension 47460 or e-mail GSE

**Tuesday 20 June***Special service of thanksgiving and dedication to mark the 150th anniversary of St Mary's Hospital*

To be held in Westminster Abbey at 12.00 hours. For complimentary tickets apply no later than Friday 28 April to Richard Abbott, room 20, c/o The Nursing Office, St Mary's NHS Trust, Praed Street, London W2 1NY.

**Thursday 22 June***College open day*

All departments will be open for fifth and sixth form students. Further information from the Schools Liaison Office, extension 58042/3.

**Saturday 24 June***St Mary's students' Summer Ball*

To be held at the Park Lane Hotel, Piccadilly. For details contact Robert Hughes, telephone 0171-725 5196.

**26 June - 7 July***WISE courses*

A series of two-day residential courses in science and engineering for lower sixth girls. Further information from the Schools Liaison Office, extension 58042/3.

## LECTURES

**Tuesday 6 June***Inaugural lecture*

'Awaiting the great British earth-

quake'. Amr Elnashai, Professor of Earthquake Engineering. To be held in the Clore lecture theatre (Huxley 213) at 17.30 hours.

**Wednesday 7 June***Inaugural lecture*

'The nine numbers of the cosmos'. Michael Rowan-Robinson, Professor of Astrophysics. To be held in the Blackett laboratory theatre 1 at 17.30 hours.

**Wednesday 14 June***Inaugural lecture*

'Virtual ecology'. Professor John Woods, Department of Mineral Resources Engineering. Details to be supplied.

## WORKSHOPS

**6 - 7 June****8 - 9 June****13 - 14 June****15 - 16 June***USC workshops for academic staff and GTAs*

'Speaking technically (on lecturing and conference presentations)'

Departments should register participants through the Training Office, Level 5, Sherfield Building, extension 45518.

## July

## COLLEGE EVENTS

**Saturday 1 July***Street party and Hospital open day*

To be held in Norfolk Place at 12.30-15.30 hours. Further information from the Project Manager 0171-725 1330.

## Letters to the Editor

## Short term contracts

Dear Editor

I was flattered that the Rector should write such a long reply to my letter. He accurately restated the problem but he did not answer my questions. UCL and IC have very similar financial positions; in 1994 UCL transferred £3.4 million to reserves and IC £7 million. Why can UCL act to improve career prospects for contract research staff while IC does not?

He also did not address the point I raised of inequity between contract research staff (CRS) and permanent staff who may be doing the same work for the same pay but with totally different conditions of service.

The recent improvement in redundancy rights for some CRS at the expense of others is symptomatic of the College's thinking. The just action would have been to slightly reduce the benefits of permanent staff and raise those of CRS to their level.

I state again that there is a moral imperative to improve the career structure of those presently employed as CRS. If UCL can try to do it, why can't Imperial College? I am sure that the present inaction has been due to a lack of vision by previous rectors and I would like to hear proposals from our new leader. In this I am sure that I speak for the 55% of academics who are on short term contracts and many of the permanent staff who are moti-

vated by morality not financial expediency.

Your faithful servant (now for 11 months)  
James Bayley, Research Assistant,  
Department of Physics

Dear Editor

Like James Bayley (Letters, 25 April) I am employed at IC on a temporary research contract. I am grateful to the Rector for taking time to respond so fully to James' letter; his concern about this issue is evident. I also appreciate the financial constraints, ever more rigorous, under which we must all work these days. However, there are points of his reply with which I must take issue.

The Rector correctly states that contract research staff who are dismissed when their project's funding ends are entitled, under the old conditions, to claim redundancy compensation at the statutory rate. This doesn't seem to me to be unreasonable; the reason for that kind of dismissal is, indeed, redundancy, and it's far from clear why it should go uncompensated.

He is also right that a member of staff dismissed like this could, in principle, claim unfair dismissal; any employee dismissed for any reason has the technical right to make such a claim. However, if the redundancy was genuine (as it would be in the type of case the Rector describes) then the claim would certainly fail.

What's more, I think I'm right in saying that no claim of unfair dismissal has ever been made under those circumstances at this College in its entire history. (The Rector will no doubt correct me if I'm wrong here; certainly, Personnel have been unable to come up with such a case.) It's hard to see, then, in what way this is a danger from which the College needs protecting.

Where an unfair dismissal claim might be successful is where the contract has ended but the funding hasn't; common enough in these days of 'rolling' contracts. If funding is still available then there has been no redundancy; under the old conditions, the College would need to show due cause to dismiss someone in this situation. And rightly so, surely? The new contract makes all staff on rolling contracts vulnerable to dismissal on a whim, with no right of appeal.

I'm not unusually thin-skinned, but I couldn't help being bruised a bit by the Rector's implication, no doubt unintentional, that if you've been at IC less than seven years on a research contract then you're a 'young' researcher who has been here a 'short time', and that the College therefore has no 'obligation' to you. I hope he will take the opportunity to assure me and my CRS colleagues that that isn't his view.  
Yours faithfully  
Phil Ramsden, Research Assistant,  
Department of Mathematics

## VAT slogan

The winner of the slogan competition will be announced in the next issue of *IC Reporter*. Many slogans have been submitted so the judging process is taking longer than expected. The slogan also has to be approved by the VAT man!

## IC Reporter

*IC Reporter* will be published fortnightly during term time. Contributions for the next issue should be received by **Friday 12 May**.

These can be sent to Victoria Browning via e-mail (v.browning) or internal post (Rm 546b, Sherfield Building). Extension 46697. Fax 0171-594 6700.

Please note the editor reserves the right to cut or amend the articles as necessary.

Information correct at time of going to press.

## NOTICE BOARD

## Wardenship vacancy

Applications are currently invited for the post of warden of Bernard Sunley House, in Evelyn Gardens. Rent-free accommodation is offered in exchange for pastoral duties within the House. Any non-undergraduate member of the College is eligible to apply. Details and application forms are available from Alison Heath, room 509, Sherfield, extension 45517.

## MBA scholarships

Up to four scholarships are available to study the College's MBA on either the full-time or part-time courses. Three scholarships are available for staff and one for the child of a member of staff. Applications must be made to the Management School by 3 July for the full-time course (details from Justin Welford, extension 49149) and 18 September for the part-time course (details from Siew Tim Lim, extension 49105).

## Research fellowships programme

The University of Leeds is inviting applications from researchers to join a research fellowships programme. Fellowships are in the range of £20,000-£25,000 and are supported by development grants of up to £30,000. They will be available for three to five years in the first instance and are expected to lead to a permanent academic appointment. For further information write, outlining your research interests, to the Research Strategy Unit, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT. Telephone 0113-233 4116.

## Do you suffer from hayfever?

Researchers in ICCET are looking for volunteers for a study of the link between air pollution and hayfever. If you have hayfever and would be prepared to help by keeping a daily symptom diary please contact Angelica Vellopoulou, extension 49281.

## Fire alarm notice

Since April, following discussions with the Fire Authority and in close liaison with departments and centres, the fire alarms in all buildings on the main campus go straight to evacuate when activated. There will be NO intermittent signal.

## Senior Christian Fellowship

Meets every Monday 13.00-14.00 hours during term time, in room 686, Huxley Building, for bible study, prayer and discussion.