LIFE THROUGH A LENS
DOUG ALLAN’S TALES FROM THE DEEP

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY
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Or perhaps that should be unconventional Scotland.

Welcome to Stirling Minds, the magazine for everyone who is interested in what’s going on at our University. We hope that alumni, staff and our many friends at home and around the world will enjoy reading this new-look publication and will find it a good way of keeping in touch.

Stirling Minds is now an expanded publication welcoming lively debate with external contributors, as well as your old favourites – because of course we’ve kept graduate profiles and class notes. We’ve also created a magazine website where you can access content whenever you like.

Take a look around:
www.stirlingminds.stir.ac.uk

The Stirling family is continually growing and our connections far from the campus matter to us all. We want to keep you up-to-date with our news throughout the year, so as well as the website and magazine we’re launching a monthly enewsletter for staff and a quarterly enewsletter for alumni. If you would like to sign up for the latter or opt to receive the magazine electronically in future; if you know someone who has lost contact with the University and would like to receive the magazine; or if you think you might contribute a class notes entry, please contact:
alumni@stir.ac.uk

These are challenging times as we all know. But Stirling is in great heart, and we are fortunate that we can draw on the experience and support of our worldwide network of alumni and friends.

Happy reading and best wishes,
James Naughtie,
Chancellor,
University of Stirling

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The University of Stirling is recognised as a Scottish Charity with number SC 011159.
Stirling has been named Scottish University of the Year for 2009/2010 by the Sunday Times, in recognition of the University’s “outstanding student experience and record for innovation and high quality teaching”. The newspaper’s analysis of the latest National Student Survey results, which covered students’ views on the quality of teaching, learning resources and their overall satisfaction with university life, showed that Stirling registered one of the biggest year-on-year gains of any university in the UK.

Professor Gerry McCormac, one of Northern Ireland’s leading academics, has been named as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University in succession to Professor Christine Hallett, who is retiring. He joins us in May and said: “Scotland needs Stirling and its distinctive contribution to society: enterprising graduates with the skills to drive its economy forward; first class research which can be turned into jobs; and a commitment to the community which ensures that education and the advancement of knowledge is shared for the good of all.”

A Stirling researcher’s discovery of live oysters in the Firth of Forth, over fifty years after they were declared extinct in the area, has major implications for fisheries in Scotland. Dr Liz Ashton, a research fellow at the Institute of Aquaculture, found two oysters about 100 metres apart, visible at a very low tide. Her discovery gives real hope that there could once again be oyster farming in the river. At its peak, the Firth of Forth oyster fishery produced over 30 million oysters a year, but over-harvesting caused the fishery to collapse by 1920.

The UK’s first hub of child protection expertise, the Multi-Agency Resource Service (MARS), has opened at Stirling, to share good practice and advise Scottish social workers about keeping young people safe from neglect or abuse. Beth Smith, Director, said: “MARS will be a valuable resource for child protection agencies and practitioners in Scotland by assisting them to deal with complex cases. We have an opportunity to make a real difference, by helping them to access the expertise they may need to carry out their work effectively.”

As Scotland’s University for Sporting Excellence, Stirling has continued to lead the way with its appointment as the hub of Winning Students, the national sports scholarship scheme for student athletes in colleges and universities across Scotland. Among the initiatives undertaken by Winning Students, Scotland’s first National Women’s Football Academy has been established in Stirling, helping some of our most promising young female footballers to reach their potential.

Stirling’s new Centre for Memory & Learning in the Lifespan brings together academic research in neuropsychology, developmental psychology, health and education. Its Director, Dr Tracy Alloway, has research interests in how working memory, our ability to remember and manipulate information, impacts on learning. She won the prestigious Joseph Lister Award from the British Science Association for her work on the capacity of children to store and manipulate information for brief periods of time.

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Stirling graduates of a certain vintage will remember a larger-than-life character called Cool Al Davidson, whose fame was assured by his regular candidacy for student president. A man made for the Monster Raving Loony Party and until Alex Salmond returned from Westminster to rescue the SNP, the only serious electoral challenge Jack McConnell and his cohorts had ever faced.

I owe Cool Al a debt of gratitude, not just for making the hustings eminently more bearable amongst the earnest young things of the emerging political classes – he stood as ‘the Pope’ one year, with a can of tartan special strapped to his head beneath a tartan mitre – but for setting me on my way for a career in journalism.

Al wrote a column of university news in the Stirling Observer and approaching graduation in 1982 he was looking for a successor. I had a year to go and one night in the old Grange club I asked what he was going to do with the column. As Al was determined that it should not fall into the hands of the politicians, and time was running out, he asked if I was interested. The next day I was down at the Observer offices and signed up as the next author of University Notes.

The cuttings I generated over the following year (embarrassing now, I’m sure) were enough to secure a place at Preston Polytechnic’s journalism course and from there my first full-time job as a reporter on the old Chester Observer.

Like its Stirling namesake, the Chester paper was a venerable old publication, packed with local news. It was especially loved by its readers for the two broadsheet pages of obituaries, with the names of all the mourners who attended funerals in the town that week. Unlike the Stirling paper, it was not owned by a large publisher and while I’m glad to say the Stirling Observer is still going strong, the Chester Observer was swallowed up by its Thomson-owned rival and quickly closed down. It had been the oldest continuously published paper in Britain.

Then, as now, sentiment plays little part in the world of newspapers and even reader loyalty isn’t enough to guarantee success. The Chester Observer outsold the Chester Chronicle in the town by three to one, but as an independent publication its lack of financial muscle meant it was doomed.

But a revolution was taking place. Free newspapers were springing up everywhere and just down the road in Warrington, Eddie Shah launched his paper Today with new technology in the face of fierce union opposition.

There were so many jobs available in the North of England at that time that journalists could take their pick. And when the Shah revolution finally swept away the old practices, and the print unions and high costs with them, newspapers became a boom industry.

Without the restrictions which had killed off the Glasgow Herald’s much-lionised sister the Sunday Standard, Thomson Regional Newspapers were able to launch Scotland On Sunday in 1989 and matched it with Wales on Sunday and Sunday Life in Ulster.

But the omens for future trouble were already there. Circulations of the big local dailies were already on the slide. Glasgow and Edinburgh had long since said goodbye to papers like the Citizen and Dispatch and while the creation of local monopolies meant that classified revenues were healthy, sales growth was hard to come by.

Fast forward 20 years and the internet revolution has swept away much of that income at the same time as giving people a free and easy means of accessing information for which they once had to pay. The foundations of profitable titles – the big three pillars of jobs, property and motors – have crumbled in the face of both the internet and the recession and the industry is undoubtedly in a crisis which will inevitably claim casualties.

But there are reasons for optimism. For one, newspaper companies are now being forced to examine what was always their core function, the journalism. The development of newspapers was not chicken-and-egg; editorial built audiences for advertisers to exploit and poor editorial accelerates decline. Giving away for free what companies pay journalists to produce makes little economic sense, unless of course you are owned by a Russian oligarch.

“The industry is undoubtedly in a crisis which will inevitably claim casualties.”

The internet revolution has allowed vast numbers of people to read what was previously inaccessible, with unique users of newspaper sites numbering in millions around the world while hard copy sales remain in the thousands back home, but the internet millions have failed to produce anything like the same amounts of money as newspapers once generated. Even with traditional revenues badly depleted, online sales still represent less than ten per cent of most newspaper companies’ incomes.

And now that Rupert Murdoch and others have finally woken up to the fact that the digital emperor has got no clothes, or is certainly only in his underpants, there is a chance that the rush to give away quality journalism will come to a halt and the rebuilding of the newspaper business model can enter a new phase. Online audiences can still be maintained but at realistic levels, with realistic returns and realistic expectations.

In future budgets may be smaller and there will be fewer publications, although it’s easy to forget there are still more newspapers around now than there were in the 60s. But even in the age of the iPad, or whatever succeeds it next year, I believe there will still be room for the printed word. Portable, foldable, disposable, browsable, costs less than a half pint and doesn’t need recharging… what an invention!
The best we can say about world economic prospects for 2010 is that they are very uncertain. Faltering recovery in the Western world has been driven by large dollops of government spending. Everyone knows that this is unsustainable, but no one is sure when is the best time to cut back on spending so as not to damage the recovery. It was a different world three years ago. The Western world was awash with credit. Many assets were rocketing in price, particularly domestic and commercial property. And many economists were under the strange illusion that actors in these markets behaved rationally. The authorities had not noticed, or had turned a blind eye to, the large number of mortgages being made available to poor households in the USA when there was little or no chance of repayment. Eventually the credit bubble burst, with profound implications both for financial markets and for the real economy. Credit became very scarce: trust between financial institutions disappeared due to suspicions of insolvency. As a result some financial markets almost closed down. The lack of credit caused output to fall, unemployment to rise and tax revenue to collapse. Herbert Stein, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors under Presidents Nixon and Ford, coined the simple dictum that “when things can’t go on forever, they don’t”.

Unfortunately his wisdom was largely ignored. An economy cannot live on credit forever. Eventually, there has to be sufficient saving to pay back what has been borrowed. But the government, conscious of both the economic and political damage that a full scale recession would cause, has substituted public credit for the private credit that kept the British economy growing throughout the “noughties”. Yet Stein’s dictum still applies: the government cannot endlessly accumulate debt. And the implications of this simple fact are now clear.

There will have to be cuts in public sector spending, and these will be more severe than any experienced in the post-war period. This will have effects right across the spectrum of government services – education, health, local government, transport, defence – none will escape. Scotland has not fared too badly compared with other parts of the United Kingdom, but it will have to bear its share of these cuts. It has a larger public sector than the UK as a whole and if the private sector does not expand to take up the slack as the public sector contracts, there will be another downturn – a “double dip”. Unemployment, which is particularly concentrated among young people, will rise even further.

Together with my colleague Professor David Blanchflower, a former member of the Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee, I have been writing about the negative effects of unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular. We have argued that the young suffer particularly during recessions and that the effects of unemployment when young have more negative consequences on life experiences than spells of unemployment among the middle-aged. This applies to young graduates as well as the unskilled. Avoiding the double dip has therefore to be a high priority. But none of the main political parties seem prepared to commit to precise plans for a reduction in the deficit until after the election. Let’s hope that the recovery is strong enough that this lack of transparency does not harm the life chances of young people entering the labour market for the first time.

Find out more at www.stirlingminds.stir.ac.uk
RESEARCH THAT SHAPES AND IMPROVES LIVES

WHO’S LOOKING AT YOU?

Researchers from 21 countries have signed up to a Europe-wide network of surveillance academics led by Dr William Webster of Stirling Management School.

A recognised expert on Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance cameras, e-government and electronic public services, he explained: “The programme is about facilitating a better understanding of what it is like to live in a society where technologically mediated surveillance is so prevalent – both for the surveyor and the surveyed. It will look at our experiences of the impact of surveillance on people, businesses, technology and governance.

Today, surveillance is all around us, it is ubiquitous, pervasive and normalised, on an unprecedented scale. Our movements and activities are routinely monitored through video surveillance, purchase patterns, sat-nav and mobiles.

“However, this surveillance is also subtle and discreet, with most people unaware that they cast a data shadow as they go about their daily lives, and relatively little is known about the impacts of widespread surveillance on individuals and society as a whole. Concerns have emerged, including the effects on privacy, social trust, human behaviour and public space, the depth of accountability and transparency, the risks of information sharing, the cost-benefit of technological systems and the prevalence of errors.”

ALCOHOL AD CONTROLS PUSHED TO LIMIT

Professor Gerard Hastings and colleagues in the Institute for Social Marketing at Stirling, have shown that alcohol advertisements still target young people and promote drinking despite restrictions on the content of alcohol advertisements in the UK.

An analysis of previously unseen industry documents demonstrated that companies are “pushing the boundaries” of the advertising code of practice. Gerard and his team warned that the UK system of self-regulatory controls for alcohol advertising is failing, and argued that the UK needs to tighten both the procedures and scope of the regulation of alcohol advertising.

The alcohol industry spends around £800m a year promoting alcohol in advertising, the documents discuss. They suggest that regulation should be independent of the alcohol and advertising industries, and alcohol advertisements be pre-vetted.

He outlined the aims of the Living in Surveillance Societies programme, which is the first European-wide research programme dedicated to ‘understanding surveillance’. “This network brings academics together, rather than being a research project in itself, to raise awareness of surveillance in society, to better understand the consequences of technologically enhanced surveillance, and help inform surveillance policy and practice across Europe.”

FOOD LABELS A FISHY BUSINESS

A major research project led by James Young, Professor of Applied Marketing, has demonstrated that consumers are being confused by eco-labeling on fish. The researchers propose an improved scheme which will better inform the public and help developing economies to compete.

Their report, Review of Fish Sustainability Information Schemes, argues that consumers must have access to better information and explains how the current schemes can add to consumer confusion.

“Working from different data sets has led to results which are inconsistent between schemes and have thus created confusion for consumers,” said Professor Young. The report proposes core quality standards, including transparency, accuracy, peer review and which would improve the inconsistent and sometimes conflicting advice which emanates from some advisory lists, which are often dated and too general to be of real value.

While certification schemes and recommendation lists have increased awareness of the issues associated with sustainable fishing and aquaculture within a limited number of markets, the review also notes that fish products from developing economies can easily be denied access to markets if they cannot afford to produce the data required by certification schemes.

“As sustainability information becomes more important to consumers in the developed world, this risks putting developing economies at a trading disadvantage,” Professor Young said. “There’s plenty of scope for this whole area to be rationalised, and for better information to be available to consumers, so that they can really understand what they’re buying.”

STIRLING LEADS FIRST EVER STUDIES INTO SELF-HARM RATES AMONG TEENAGERS

New research by the University’s Suicidal Behaviour Research Group has shown the extent of self-harm among teenagers, with girls at least three times more likely to report self-harm than boys.

In the first ever studies to examine the prevalence of adolescent self-harm, in Scotland 14% of teenagers have self-harmed, and a further 14% have thought seriously about doing so. In Northern Ireland these figures were 10% and 13% respectively. Led by Professor Rory O’Connor the researchers questioned thousands of secondary school students.

Although studies so far do not determine what causes young people to self-harm, factors associated include drug and alcohol use, bullying, infrequent exercise, concerns about sexual orientation, sexual abuse, self-harm by family and friends, impulsivity, anxiety and low levels of self-esteem.

The young people reported many different motives for their self-harm, including getting relief from a terrible state of mind and wanting to punish themselves. In addition, half of the respondents said that they had seriously wanted to kill themselves.

Professor O’Connor said: “Self-harm is a major public health issue which requires continued attention. The roles of hospital treated self-harm among adults is worryingly high. These findings suggest an important role for schools in adolescents’ wellbeing, managing life stresses and promoting self-esteem.”
Award winning wildlife documentary cameraman and photographer, Doug Allan has filmed in some of the most extreme land and underwater environments on earth.

In a career spanning four decades, he has captured several on-screen firsts, from polar bears trying to capture belugas in a frozen hole in Arctic Canada to orcas attacking grey whales off California’s coast.

“I like to communicate my passions to other people, and I think if students follow their hearts, their career direction will take care of itself.”

Described by colleague David Attenborough as “one of the toughest cameramen in the business”, Doug has taken part in over 50 filming trips for critically acclaimed BBC series The Blue Planet, Planet Earth and more recently Life.

His passion for filming the natural world has earned him no less than three BAFTAs and three Emmys since graduating from Stirling with an honours degree in Marine Biology in 1973.
“Extreme polar filming isn’t for everyone; it’s not exactly comfortable with your extremities freezing while you’re waiting for the perfect shot.”

Images Morgan Flower/Barcroft Media.

HOW DID YOU MAKE THE LEAP FROM STUDYING SCIENCE TO UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY?

A I’ve always been interested in science, but diving is my first love. When I graduated I combined the two by doing a range of biology related and commercial diving jobs. My big break was in 1976 when I first went to the Antarctic to work as a research diver on a British Antarctic Survey station. The job entailed helping the scientists to carry out their underwater studies. I wasn’t really into photography at that time; it was just a hobby I enjoyed while working on the base.

WHEN DID YOUR CAREER CHANGE DIRECTION?

A I met David Attenborough in 1981, when a film crew came on base to film Living Planet – they were impressed with my stills and that gave me encouragement to turn professional. After that I spent a winter at Halley Station, which offered me the chance to capture Emperor Penguins on cine film. I was low on experience of filmmaking, but my experience in the extreme cold proved to be an asset and the BBC bought the footage for a forthcoming series. I went on to have two films commissioned by Survival Anglia in 1987 and since then I’ve spent part of every year filming in either one of the two poles.

WHAT EXTREME LENGTHS HAVE YOU GONE TO IN CAPTURING THE FOOTAGE YOU NEED?

A On land you usually use long lenses so you don’t disturb your subject. With polar bears for example around 60 metres is a comfortable distance. But underwater in even the clearest water you’d want to be much closer. The sea is home to the biggest animals in the planet. When filming great whales we’re maybe only 10 metres away from them. It is how you behave that will put them at ease, or make them wary. It they accept you they stay, if they don’t they’ll swim away or sweep their tail through the water as a warning to back off. The closest shave I’ve ever had was when I was snorkeling in the Canadian Arctic. A walrus came up beneath me, grabbed me by the waist and started to pull me down exactly as it would a seal before crushing and eating it. But I hit it hard on the head with my fist and it backed off. If it had reacted differently I would have been a goner. The Inuit have a great saying which equally applies to all predators, “It isn’t the bear you know, but if they do attack humans they’ll use all their guile to get you”. Most animals stick to the prey they know, but if they do attack humans they’ll use all their guile to get you. The element of surprise is important to them.

Q YOU’VE RECENTLY GIVEN A LECTURE TO OUR STUDENTS, WHY IS EDUCATION IMPORTANT TO YOU?

A I like to communicate my passions to other people, and I think if students follow their hearts, their career direction will take care of itself.

I also feel it’s so important that people reconnect with the planet. We’re just not realizing how dependent we are on the natural world and the impact we have on it. I’ve been visiting the Poles since the ‘70s and the changes I see are worrying – the ice diminishes in area every year and it’s also thinning. If the worst case scenario happens, polar bear numbers could drop from 25,000 to 5,000 as they lose their habitat. We may not know with absolute certainty what will be the final outcome of our ‘experiment’ with the climate, but it’s crucial we urgently rein CO2 emissions otherwise it will be too little too late. Climate change has a massive momentum; it’s not a tap you can quickly turn off.

IS IT TRUE YOU PROPOSED TO YOUR WIFE SUE FLOOD ADrift ON AN ICE FLOE?

A Yes, Sue and I were filming for Blue Planet in the Canadian Arctic on solid ice 50 or 60 miles from land, capturing footage of whales from the ice edge. One morning we awoke to find ourselves in thick fog and discovered that the ice had broken up about us, exposing us to the open water. The ice floe was about 35 metres across, but if the wind had picked up it could have broken up in minutes. All we had was a small boat so we radioed for help to come, which it did in the form of a helicopter some eight hours later. During that time I took the opportunity to propose. Sue jokes that I did it because I thought we were going to die, but the truth is, I reckoned if I did it then she couldn’t ask me to take her back to the spot ten years later!

Dr Doug Allan, an alumnus (1973) and honorary graduate (2007) of the University, was appointed as an Honorary Professor in the Institute of Aquaculture in January 2010.

© Images by Doug Allan and Sue Flood.
Honorary graduate Rory Stewart and his Turquoise Mountain charity, prove that beauty can be rescued from the city’s rubble, writes Trudy Whyle.

“Years of bombs and bullets have all but destroyed the once beautiful city of Kabul, yet in the ruined back streets, a surprise awaits. On December 2009, 35 people graduated from the city’s Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture. These twenty men and fifteen women were the first students to complete three-year courses in Calligraphy, Woodwork and Ceramics and the Institute which produced them is a small miracle rising from the rubble of Kabul.

Although the city has been at the centre of a war zone for over thirty years, a transformation is taking place there, thanks mainly to the efforts of the Turquoise Mountain charity. The charity’s ambitious mission is to preserve the country’s architectural and cultural heritage through regeneration of its traditional crafts and historic areas. In the process, it teaches skills, creates jobs and tries to encourage a renewed sense of national identity in the people of the area.

The enormous and far-reaching task of establishing Turquoise Mountain in Kabul was entrusted to its Chief Executive, Professor Rory Stewart OBE. The amazing details of his life to date can be read at www.stirlingminds.stir.ac.uk.

In November 2009, the University conferred an honorary doctorate on Rory, ‘in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the western understanding of Asian culture and his service to humanity’.

In the middle of January 2006, one week after the charity had been created, Rory arrived in Murad Khane, an old and particularly run down quarter of Kabul. He moved into the empty front room of a tailoring shop, bought a Thermos, some cups and a feather duster, hired one employee and has freely admitted since that he had no idea what he was doing back then.

When I spoke to Rory for this feature, almost exactly four years had passed, and he should have been celebrating an incredible list of the charity’s achievements to date. Instead he was attempting to be philosophical about the fact that suicide bombers had brought mayhem to the Murad Khane neighbourhood just 24 hours earlier, leaving his staff and students traumatised and putting him on the next available flight out there to assess the damage….

“Our teachers and students had just settled down to a morning’s work, when there was a loud bang,” Rory explains. “Within minutes, the building’s roofs were swimming with armed police having a shoot-out with Taliban fighters. Surrounded by gunfire, the teachers were no doubt thinking that this absolutely was not what they’d signed up for. They’d volunteered to restore buildings and regenerate craft skills, but they’d walked into a war zone instead. And this illustrates the problem we face…”

“One of my highest moments came as I strolled into our woodwork school to see 50 men and women busy at professional benches with proper tools and equipment.”

Getting experienced international staff, willing to operate in Kabul is just one of many issues Rory’s team has to grapple with. He recalls that when he first went in search of a local trained craft master, the only person he could find was 76-year-old master carver, Abdul Hadi (below). Persuading him to take on thirty-odd students was a tough call. However, the buy-in of local people is crucial to the success of the whole project.
Neither educational background nor the ability to pay comes into the equation when the Institute is interviewing potential students. “If the Institute is to survive and the regeneration is to continue, we need to get the community directly involved in what we are trying to do,” he insists. “But in this insecure environment, the tendency is for communities to isolate themselves from each other.”

As far as the issue of safety and its implications for recruitment, there is financial uncertainty and many practical obstacles to progress. “When we first began, we had no utilities and it’s impossible to create a working environment when you have no water supply or toilets.”

“Huge rafts of bureaucracy and paperwork also make our job incredibly difficult. We have to go through 15 different customs points in Kabul, just to get materials into the city from the border. And, since it’s almost impossible to buy property, we are restoring buildings knowing that we have no land title and we could lose them at any time.”

Finally, there are the cultural problems of trying to create art in a country in which many hold extremely conservative views. For some, the depiction of nature in any form of art is unacceptable. For others, the mere thought of educating women is enough to provoke outrage. “We’re acutely aware of the many cultural and philosophical issues and we spend a lot of time and energy just trying to get the balance right,” explains Rory. “For example, the art work and designs which are used in our schools appeal to Afghan sensitivities and are not in any way controversial but they are beautiful and they do generate much needed income.”

“We do have women students and are aiming for 50% of our intake to be female. Already that figure has been reached in calligraphy and woodwork and been exceeded in our jewellery school. There are no women in the ceramics school, but that’s down to the fact that it has traditionally been dominated by a few influential families.”

“Sometimes, persuading parents to allow their daughters to be taught can be tricky and we have to work really hard to convince them. It’s not unusual for a father to sit at the back of the class for a couple of weeks, to satisfy himself that what his daughter is learning is permissible. But we’re fine with that.”

“These three years, we’ve acquired the necessary administrative and teaching skills and operate a full curriculum and busy timetable. Our core teaching staff is Afghani and every department has a foreign advisor, usually a volunteer.”

No one needs to remind him that education isn’t cheap. Even in the west, very few institutions are financially self sufficient, most need ongoing supplementary funding and Turquoise Mountain is now trying to raise an endowment to ensure the Institute’s survival for the next 20 years.

However, neither educational background nor the ability to pay comes into the equation when the Institute is interviewing potential students. “This country has no infrastructure, no industry, many ethnic divisions and the scars of 30 years of war. It is the third poorest country in the world and 80% of the population can neither read nor write. So our students are chosen purely on the basis of their potential craft skills,” says Rory.

“One of my highest moments came as I strolled into our woodwork school to see 50 men and women busy at professional benches with proper tools and equipment. I hadn’t been aware of the project they had been working on but in the centre of the hall they had erected half a dozen beautifully carved columns, each about 15 feet high. The quality of the work was breathtaking and the students were beaming at me and at each other. That’s when I realised just how much they had achieved and how there’s really no limit to what they are capable of, given the chance.”

The truth is that what Rory and his 350 employees have created almost defies belief. In the Murad Khane quarter, a slim area once earmarked for demolition, the charity has cleared out 15,000 trucks of garbage by hand. It has laid pavements, brought in running water, drainage and sanitation and restored over 50 historic buildings, creating near total employment for every unemployed adult male in the area. It has also opened a health clinic and a primary school.

Now, the Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture has held its first student graduation and anyone who has been part of such an experience – whether student or teacher – will remember the excitement, relief, optimism and sheer joy which mark these calendar days. How much more emotional and poignant then, must a graduation ceremony be, when teachers and students alike have to brave so much physical danger and daily deprivation to be part of it?

Given that Rory Stewart’s credentials open doors at the highest levels – he regularly commutes to Cambridge, Massachusetts where he is a Harvard University Professor – the wonder is that he chooses to spend so much time battling bureaucracy and bloody mindedness on the streets of Kabul. When asked what the attraction was, he once told a lecture audience: “When I walk along the streets of Murad Khane, people smile at me and at each other. On the streets of Cambridge Massachusetts, people do not smile.”
Turkington Takes the Crown

Seventeen years after first following his big brother down to his local go-karting track for ‘something fun to do on a Saturday’, adrenalin junkie and Stirling alumnus, Colin Turkington achieved a lifetime ambition when he was crowned the 2009 British Touring Car Champion, writes David Christie.

At the Brands Hatch circuit in Kent, in front of his family and friends, including his 91-year-old granddad and newborn son Lewis, Colin clinched the title in a nail-biting finale.

Running from April until October, the British Touring Car Championship (BTCC) comprises 10 dates, with three races at each venue. And having seen his commanding mid-season lead almost disappear entirely, Colin entered into the final race at the final venue with the title in the balance.

“The fear of being beaten was getting to me,” admitted the 27-year-old University of Stirling graduate. “I grew up watching touring cars on TV and dreamt about winning. There had been so much emotion pent up and once the weight was off my shoulders, it all came flooding out.”

Understandably, the Northern Irishman found the whole experience somewhat overwhelming. Colin said: “I grew up watching touring cars on TV and dreamt about winning. There had been so much emotion pent up and once the weight was off my shoulders, it all came flooding out.

“It was total euphoria for me and the team, who I’d been with for six seasons. My mum and dad have been there since the very first car race, through the highs and the lows so it meant a huge amount to them too. It was a special moment, especially to have three generations of the family there with me.”

His 63rd podium of the campaign and much popped champagne later, Colin returned to his quiet hometown of Portadown, a place he describes as “about the same size as Stirling but nowhere near as fun.”

Far from lazing on a yacht in Monaco in the millionaire playboy lifestyle of a Formula One (F1) driver, Colin has spent the off-season with his family, helping his dad run his construction business and walking his dogs. 

“Stirling was the ideal place to be as the campus has a very nice ambiance about it, so it was easy to come down after the high of a race.”
“To complete a degree was great, but what I really took from Stirling was the training for later life as I grew up a lot living away from home.”

And during the racing season too, Portadown provides a welcome sanctuary. “Everything is 100 miles an hour when I come over to England to race,” added Colin. “So afterwards, I head straight home and take a few days to relax. That is one of the advantages of living in Northern Ireland; you can distance yourself physically and mentally - especially if you’ve had a bad weekend.

“Likewise, when I was at Stirling, it was the ideal place to be as the campus has a very nice ambiance about it so it was easy to come down after the high of the race.”

Lifestyle is not the only area where the similarities to F1 don’t match up, but Colin knows exactly which he prefers. He said: “British Touring Cars is the best place to race, no doubt about it. It’s not like watching an F1 race, it’s unique as anything can happen and it is guaranteed to happen.

“Last year, in the first eight races there were eight different winners. As everyone has the same equipment, it is all down to the driver and a lot of my friends who are now friends for life. It was such a great experience.”

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From Cosmopolitan to A&E, four recent graduates share their stories as they start life beyond Stirling:

1. Sharon Ray, BSc Nursing 2008

Having left school at the age of 16, I never thought I would be where I am now, and it’s vastly due to the University of Stirling and my experiences there.

I was nervous on my first day on campus, but as the days and weeks flew in, I gradually became more confident in my abilities and with great advice and support from my personal tutor, I successfully graduated as a Registered Nurse.

It takes a lot of hard work and dedication, but remember that you are not alone. I met some great people who will be my life long friends, even though we live in various countries now!


I started my studies at Stirling in September 1997. Being a local lad, I knew of the global reputation of the Institute of Aquaculture and had seen at first hand the beauty of the campus, but was little prepared for the fantastic journey upon which I was about to embark.

Although student halls in 1997 were less than impressive, I was fortunate enough to quickly make many friends. In retrospect, I am amazed at how quickly those four years passed. During my further degrees, I was asked back when they got the opportunity to hire an editorial intern. The variety of modules within the course also gave me a wide perspective of journalism as a whole, which in turn has provided me with lots of interchangeable skills for my current career.

3. Dr Robert Oliver BSc (Hons) 2001, MSc 2003, PhD Aquaculture 2009

Attending Stirling was without a doubt, the best decision I ever made! The MLitt in Publishing programme provided me with the design and marketing skills needed to pursue a career in graphic design and the professors provided valuable insight into the publishing industry from their first hand experience.

One of the biggest highlights while at Stirling, was the incredible friendships I formed with people from around the world. I am fortunate to count them as some of my closest friends, even though we live in various countries now!

Since graduating in June 2009 with a 2:1 degree, I’ve been working with the features team at Cosmopolitan magazine. I’d already been at the company to undergo a complete corporate rebranding and have been able to build the graphic design fundamentals from the ground up. If I could offer any advice, it would be to pursue something you are truly passionate about because life is too short to do something you don’t absolutely love!

4. Lorna Gray, BA (Hons) Journalism Studies 2009

Since graduating in June 2009 with a 2:1 degree, I’ve been working with the features team at Cosmopolitan magazine. I’d already been at the magazine for work experience and was asked back when they got the opportunity to hire an editorial intern.

Studying at Stirling fuelled my interest for print journalism, especially the magazine journalism module which focused on all aspects of features writing. I was encouraged to network and make contacts through work experience which I did at both More magazine and Cosmopolitan.

If I could offer any advice, it would be to network early and never stop making contacts through work experience which I did at both More magazine and Cosmopolitan.

As an alumnus you remain a key member of the University throughout your life. With this in mind we are reviewing how we can best encourage and enable you to participate in the development of the University. We will be consulting widely with alumni to ensure we capture and consider the broadest possible input. You can update your contact details at www.alumni.stir.ac.uk/update_details
1970s
KIRSTEEN ROSS, BA ENGLISH 1973
I left Stirling in 1973; I left work in 2009. I find that being retired is like being a student. I do as I like again, but in more comfortable surroundings.

DR ZIYA HAO, PHD CHEMISTRY 1976
I left Unilever in 2000 and started my own consultancy company. In April 2001 I was appointed to Cheshire Probation Board and I am also a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of Alac Energy. Last year I was invited to the reunion of the Chemistry Department. I found this very interesting and somewhat sentimental, it brought all the memories flooding back.

1980s
HAMSHE STEDMAN, BA ECONOMICS 1980
As a result of meeting through an alumni Glasgow reunion last year I am working with fellow alumnus Steve Galloway (BA 1989) from Exomarketing.com to establish ways to the lucrative Japanese market for products from Scotland’s last traditional golf club manufacturer. I would like to hear from any Stirling alumni who might be looking for unique corporate golfing gifts or might be interested in developing markets for St Andrews Golf Company products.

CAROL ANNE STEWART, BSC MANAGEMENT SCIENCE 1988
I am working with AXA Insurance, but more interesting is that I am also Founder/Chairperson of Scotland’s most successful Women’s Football Club – Glasgow City FC. My email is: glasgowcityfcfelix.co.uk. I would love to hear from you if you want to be part of an ambitious club.

1990s
MARK CRANSTOUN, BA ECONOMICS & ACCOUNTANCY 1991
After working in commercial roles for 18 years I’ve recently set up www.totalagitation.com to help companies maximise their profitability. I’m living in Henley On Thames with wife Emma and children Max, three, and Laila, one.

STAN SHIRES, BA (HONS) MARKETING 1994
I have just moved to a gorgeous village called Lower Swell near Stow on the Wold in the Cotswolds. Still loving working for Citroen UK. I am now a Regional Manager for Parts & Services looking after the middle third of the UK. I am still in touch with loads of friends from Uni and went to two alumni weddings in 2009 - Emily Farnworth’s in Prague and Chris Jackson’s in Bermuda. Find me on Facebook.

DARREN SU, VISITING STUDENT 1995
I got married a few months ago to a fantastic little cowgirl named Tiffany. You’ll typically find us in California where I work for MTV as producer of Xfire.com. I’d love to reconnect on Facebook or via my website darrensuo.com

HEATHER ALARI, BA (HONS) BUSINESS STUDIES 1996
Since 2006 I have been working as National Fundraiser for Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. My role involves fundraising for our national development centres, which provide rehabilitative support to torture survivors and are located in Manchester, Glasgow, Newcastle, and Birmingham.

ADAM FRYE, BA (HONS) MARKETING 1998
My wife Jenny and I are very pleased to announce the arrival of baby Heather! Born September 16th, our first child Lucy Grace has brought endless joy and sleepless nights!

LUIAN ANNE RAE, BA (HONS) SOCIOLOGY & SOCIAL POLICY 1999
I had a big birthday party on 10 October 2009 when I hit the big 5-0 and got engaged to Stewart Brown from Glasgow. I’ve also moved to a specially adapted disabled bungalow in Blackburn, West Lothian.

2000s
CHARLOTTE SORCE (NEE SAUNDERS), BA (HONS) ENGLISH & FRENCH 2000
I emigrated to France in 2000 and would like to get in contact with Lucy Blavet, a school and university friend. I still have your Wineo the Pooh in Latin!. My email is: missjua@Hotmail.fr and tel is 00 33 3 56 59 93 76.

FIONA WADDLE, BA (HONS) FILM & MEDIA STUDIES & POLITICAL SCIENCE 2003
I now work as a Project Manager for Ingenico UK and Andrew and I (finally) got married in December. I would love to hear from Claire McFarl as she is reading Stirling Minds.

VINOD KUMAR, MSC MEDIA MANAGEMENT 2003
Roshan is now one and a half years old and my wife is expecting our second child in July. Professionally, I am Head of School, for the School of Media and Communications at Management Development Institute of Singapore. After several years of corporate life, academic life has its own challenges which I relish. I enjoy moulding young minds, pushing boundaries whilst building the school. This ethic and spirit is something I have acquired from my time at Stirling.

EMMA-LISA HILL, BSC (HONS) BIOLOGY 2005
I’m looking for Charles, who shared the top floor of Murray hall in 2000 to 2001. Emma lms h 1c. I can’t remember his surname, but would love to get back in touch with him. My email address is kateal_blue@hotmail.com

KATERINA MOUZOURAKI, MSC PUBLIC RELATIONS 2005
Greetings from Greece. Since my graduation I’ve been working as an Account Manager in V+O COMMUNICATION, a Greek PR agency, based in Athens. I’ve been recently married to Apostolos Foteinos. Would love to have another alumni reunion in Athens soon.

PAUL MCCORMICK, BA (HONS) SPANISH & MARKETING 2006
I relocated immediately after graduation, and have been living in Alicante for several years now. Working as an International Sales Executive and living on the Mediterranean coast. Contemplating a Masters in UK 2010...perhaps in Stirling?

CONTACTING FRIENDS
The following alumni are not in contact with the University so we were unable to put University Friends back in touch.

Vivienne Adams wants to get in touch with Wendy Robison, BA English 1982.

David Cottam, BSc (Hons) Biology 1981 would like to get in touch with Alexander Wilson, BSc (Hons) Biology 1981 and Deborah Dutton, BSc (Hons) Environmental Science 1983.

We would love to find out what you’re up to. Keep your news coming in and email alumni@stir.ac.uk to be included in the next issue. This is your chance to shine and more can be found on the alumni website at www.alumni.stir.ac.uk/class-notes

Over the centuries, many lives have been played out against the imposing backdrop of Airthrey Castle. Today it is the dramatic setting of the University’s School of Law but 80 years ago, it had a different function entirely. From 1939 when it became a maternity home, until 1969 when it passed into University hands, Airthrey Castle was the birthplace of thousands of local babies. In response to a newspaper appeal made by the University last year, many people from the Stirling area have sent us their memories of Airthrey which offer tantalising glimpses of young mothers’ experiences half a century ago. We have printed some here, but you can find many more examples at: www.stirlingminds.stir.ac.uk

“I was only two weeks before my due date when I learned I was expecting twins. At Airthrey, the babies’ early arrival was discouraged by a diet of cold milk, juice or water with meals and no hot soups or cups of tea. Once my daughters, Gillan and Hazel were born, I was transferred to a room with a view across the lake to the Wallace Monument and remember watching deer walking across the front lawn in the snow. I still have the two ‘bricks’ I was asked to purchase. They were postcards issued by the Royal College of Midwives and sold as part of their fundraising campaign for a new maternity college. Each brick cost £1 – which was a sizeable amount of money back then – and because I’d had twins, I was obliged to buy two of them. Both Gillan and Hazel returned to the campus on their wedding days, to be photographed against the stunning backdrop of the castle and its loch.”

Mrs Angela McGregor, Blairgowrie remembering March 1958

“By the time my husband was knocking on the front door of Airthrey, I was already in labour. It was opened by a nurse who ushered me in, said a few words to him as he stood on the front steps, took my suitcase from him and closed the door in his face!”

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
After Elaine’s birth, my husband and mother were allowed to view our new baby through the nursery window only. Even I wasn’t allowed to hold her outside of feeding times – and breast feeding was obligatory, bottle feeding being strictly condemned. The castle was cold and Victorian and we were confined to bed. The routine was strict, Matron was fierce and I can’t say my time there has many good memories. However one happy memory is of the New Year Ball. The gloomy ground floor wood panelled hall was transformed for the occasion by decorations and lights. Fearful of being discovered, several of us young mothers crept out of our rooms to look down on the dancing couples, mothers dressed in their finery – presumably by decorations and lights. Fearful of being discovered, several of us young mothers crept out of our rooms to look down on the dancing couples, mothers dressed in their finery – presumably of course; back then, nurses had a vocation and didn’t get married.

Dad and I had to use the back entrance and weren’t allowed anywhere near the main staircase. Dad was addressed as ‘Scott’ – not ‘Mr Scott’ or ‘John’. He was summoned by three rings on the bell in the basement and was on call around the clock.

Even Christmas Day wasn’t a holiday but, as the big boilers had to be stoked every few hours. My first memory, from when I was about three, was seeing the huge Christmas tree which was set up in the bay window of the impressive entrance hall. I’d never seen anything like it before and thought it was marvellous.

When I was older, I cycled to school in Bridge of Allan. My school friends were impressed that I lived in a castle (although I didn’t really!) and always wanted to come home with me.

There were some disadvantages to living at Airthrey; I couldn’t go to the Brownies because of the distance and I was always being warned to stay away from the loch, especially when it was covered with ice. But it was nice living so close to nature. Lots of birds, squirrels, rabbits and deer used to come down to the water’s edge and once Dad found two abandoned baby roe deer that we tried to hand rear.

My dad loved working at Airthrey – particularly his chauffeur duties. He drove the Matron’s Packard, which was a beautiful machine, complete with running boards. And there was the 1932 Rolls Royce Shooting Brake that was used as an ambulance.

I was very lucky to have grown up at Airthrey. I didn’t have anyone to play with but, with a castle on the doorstep, it’s easy for a little girl to live in a world of make-believe.”

Since it was built in 1791, Airthrey Castle has served the needs of generations of owners – and is still doing so today. Completely refurbished last year, yet retaining its very special character and sense of history, it sits at the heart of the University’s campus, providing our School of Law with a uniquely beautiful teaching environment.
Sporting Highlights

Sport at Stirling continues to go from strength to strength, building on our status as Scotland’s University for Sporting Excellence. In 2009 there were a number of sporting highlights for both current scholars and our internationally renowned graduates.

Winning Students, Scotland’s national sports scholarship scheme supporting top student athletes across a network of colleges and universities, almost doubled its numbers in its second year. Led by Stirling, students benefitting from the scholarship support include British No.1 wheelchair tennis player Gordon Reid – a first year undergraduate student at the University – and Olympic swimmer Hannah Miley from Robert Gordon University.

Golf, a flagship sport at Stirling, produced much to cheer. Alumna Catriona Matthew produced much to cheer. Alumna Catriona Matthew, a 4th year Accountancy student and part of Scotland’s Performance squad, was selected for the GB U23 team competing at the World Championships across a gruelling 1,500m open water swim, 40km bike ride and 10km run.

On the football front, the University welcomed the SFA National Women’s Football Academy, where 12 of Scotland’s most promising players work alongside coach Pauline Hamill to develop their talent and complete an academic degree.

For the men’s football team, 2010 has kicked off in fantastic fashion with one title already secured. They successfully retained the Queen’s Park Shield, awarded to the Scottish University League champions. The team is also on course for promotion to the East of Scotland Premier Division.

In tennis, several tournaments have been hosted on campus at the Gannochy National Tennis Centre, including an Aegon British Tour event which was won by fourth year Sport and Politics student Joe Gill. He can take inspiration in his bid for world ranking points from the form of graduate Colin Fleming, a GB Davis Cup player, who impressed in doubles at the Australian Open building on his two ATP Tour Double titles in 2009.

A number of undergraduate students have been making a splash in the new British Swimming Intensive Training Centre. Lewis Smith, Andy Hunter and Ireland’s Clare Dawson all competed at the FINA World Championships in Rome.

Triathlete David McNamee, a 4th year Finance student and part of triathlon Scotland’s Performance squad, was selected for the GB U23 team competing at the World Championships across a gruelling 1,500m open water swim, 40km bike ride and 10km run.

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“Stirling richly deserves its award. It has provided a distinctive higher education for the past 40 years in a fantastic setting. High quality teaching is backed up by research demonstrating innovation and excellence across several subject areas.”

Alastair McCall, The Sunday Times University Guide.