

be

built environment
Vol 3 • 2003

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UNIVERSITY

School of the **Built Environment**

Introduction



This summer edition of *be* has a slightly revised 'look' in line with the fresh approach which is being taken for all of our University publications. The mission, however, remains the same; to continue to keep you informed of changes in the School, and of events and aspects of our work which may be of interest. We like to hear from you so do please continue to give us feedback and please don't forget to let us know if you change job or address.

In this issue we focus in particular on Urban Design. Our Joint Centre for Urban Design (JCUD) is 31 years old in 2003. Its formation in 1972 came about because it was felt that the traditional professional disciplines had largely failed to address the issues involved in designing the public realm. Our philosophy is to integrate theory and practice from many different fields, including architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, estate management and traffic engineering. The Centre's student group is composed almost entirely of postgraduates.

The JCUD is internationally renowned, among other things, for the work of its team led by Emeritus Professor Ian Bentley on pioneering the 'responsive environments' paradigm. The team continues to work on the fresh challenges which have arrived with the 21st century, and with the global problems of dense, and sustainable, urban environments and rapid urbanisation. Three new, agenda setting books have either been recently, or are about to be published by Professors Bentley, Butina-Watson and their colleagues.

In addition to this, our Oxford Centre for Sustainable Development has currently over £3M of research contracts on sustainable urban development and inclusive design. If you would like further information on urban design at Oxford Brookes please contact Jon Cooper (jcooper@brookes.ac.uk). For further information on the Oxford Centre for Sustainable Development contact Katie Williams (kwilliams@brookes.ac.uk) or Professor Mike Jenks (mjjenks@brookes.ac.uk).

Professor John Raftery

Dean, School of the Built Environment

What's on

Conferences

8-10 September 2003
Wadham College, Oxford

Building the Link

An international conference on integrating teaching with research and practice in the built environment. See

www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/planning/LTRC/conference/home.htm

To book contact Mark Beesley on 01865 488602 or email cce@brookes.ac.uk



Short courses

Introduction to Strategic Environmental Assessment for Development Plans

Wednesday 8 October 2003 (Oxford)

Thursday 16 October 2003 (Norwich)

Design and the Planning Process

Wednesday 12 November 2003

Introduction to Strategic Environmental Assessment for Local Transport Plans

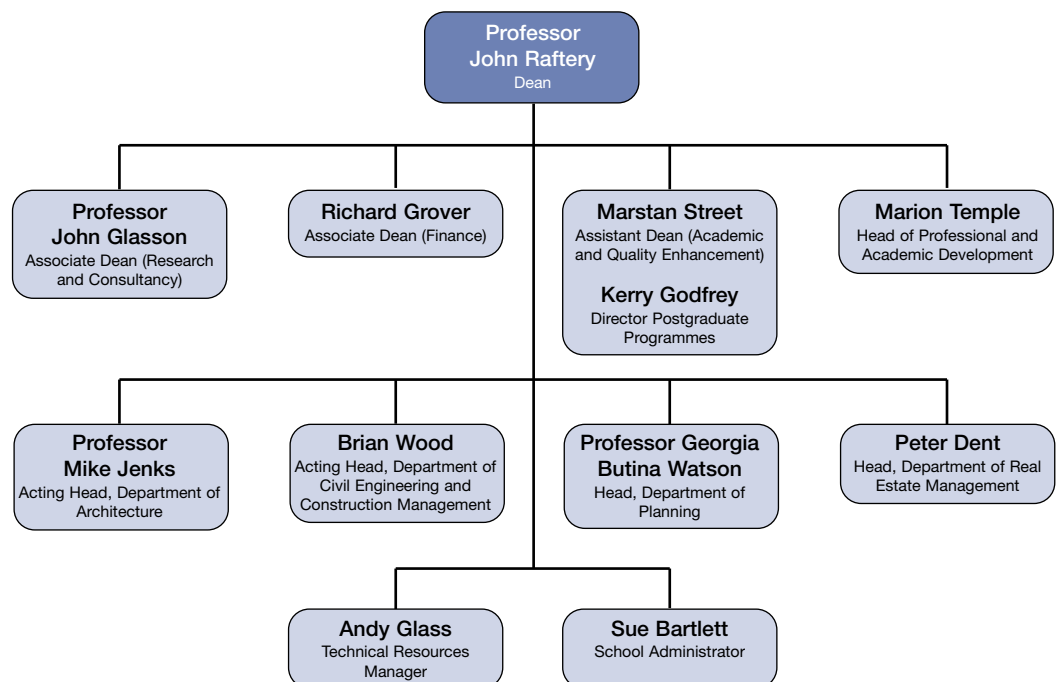
Wednesday 3 December 2003

For further details of our short course activity, please contact Karen Hughes on 01865 483458 or email khughes@brookes.ac.uk



Screen perspectives in the new digital studio photographed by Paul Proudman

School of the Built Environment Senior Management Structure



about *be*

be is the newsletter of the School of the Built Environment which encompasses four departments:

- Department of Architecture*
- Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management*
- Department of Planning*
- Department of Real Estate Management*

Research groups within these departments are:

- Centre for Development and Emergency Practices (CENDEP)*
- Centre for Vernacular Architecture Studies (CAVES)*
- Development and Transitional Economies Research Cluster (DATES)*
- Housing Studies Unit*
- Impacts Assessment Unit*
- Joint Centre for Urban Design (JCUD)*
- Oxford Centre for Real Estate Management*
- Oxford Centre for Sustainable Development (OCSD)*
- Oxford Centre for Architectural History*
- Oxford Economic Observatory (OEO)*
- Planning Policies Research Group*
- Urban Policy and Management Group*

Six Times tables multiply our success

The season of league tables is once more upon us, and the School of the Built Environment, as well as Oxford Brookes collectively, has done particularly well in the prestigious Good University Guide published by *The Times* during May 2003.

Oxford Brookes is placed in the top twenty UK universities for ten subject tables, no less than four of which are within the School of the Built Environment. We are rated third in Land and Property Management, sixth in Town and Country Planning, eleventh in Building and sixteenth in Architecture.

The Best for Jobs table ranked Oxford Brookes eighth in the percentage of graduates who leave for graduate-type employment. This is especially significant for today's students, who increasingly see the cost of taking a degree as an investment in their future careers.

Finally, in the overall ranking of UK universities, Oxford Brookes is once again top new university, for the eighth year in succession.

Launch of THRU

A shared interest in all issues concerning townscape and heritage has led to the formation of a new research group. The Townscape and Heritage Research Unit (THRU) was formed at the beginning of the year by staff from the Department of Planning and the JCUD. It was founded out of a number of important externally funded research projects: these included a townscape evaluation of the Jubilee Line Extension for Transport for London; and an ongoing ten year evaluation of the Townscape Heritage Initiative of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Both projects have allowed staff to develop their expertise in applied research and consultancy, and to create new ways of evaluating

the impacts of major investment programmes on the physical, social, community and economic well-being of local environments.

THRU is co-directed by Philip Grover who specialises in conservation-led urban regeneration work, and Alan Reeve, whose expertise is in the field of urban design.

For more information and a brochure of THRU's work and the consultancy service it offers, email Alan Reeve on arreeve@brookes.ac.uk or phone 01865 483435.

Study tour of sociable streets

The Joint Centre for Urban Design's part-time course study tour provides an opportunity for students and professionals to come together. The tour helps those on it to learn and understand other approaches to urban living, mixed-use developments and 'integrated transport experiments' in Germany and the Netherlands.

This 'environmental traffic management' installation in the regeneration area of Bonn's Innere-Nordstadt is one of a number in the area, designed in the 1980s, to produce a calm environment. Driving space is constrained and a degree of sociability is introduced back onto the street. The design philosophy behind this approach is to enforce a desired driving behaviour and to make the enforcement seem reasonable by offering benefits to other users of public space. This kind of 'shared surface area' has recently become possible in UK with the 'Homezone' legislation; in Germany and the Netherlands the law changed as much as 25 years ago.

JCUD regularly organises study tours focusing on the urban design and highways interface and has contributed to national thinking and the development of legislation in these areas.



Introduction



Hi, and welcome to the Joint Centre for Urban Design (JCUD). I'm sure most of you will know of the JCUD but you might not know exactly what we get up to in our ivory tower, the sixth floor of the Lloyd Building. So we jumped at the chance to appear in *be* and let you in on a few of our secrets.

It's pleasing to see how the JCUD has developed in the last year. Our student numbers have increased, and with our continued international reputation we are attracting large numbers of overseas applications.

In recent years a number of our established members have taken retirement or moved on to new opportunities, but that doesn't mean they have left the JCUD. We are pleased that Emeritus Professor Ian Bentley is still active in all JCUD areas. Ivor Samuels brings us both practice experience and a wealth of knowledge regarding urban morphology and coding. Emeritus Professor Brian Goodey is still providing his expertise, particularly in research.

In addition, a number of associate JCUD members provide us with up-to-date practice input. Tom Medcalf, Juliet Matthews, Geertje Kreuziger, Tobias Gevert and Anwar Punekar all bring skills in architecture, landscape architecture and research as well as urban design. We have also had some valuable input this year from Helena Webster of the Department of Architecture.

Our refurbishment of the JCUD studio space continues and, with the support of our two parent Departments, we have new studio equipment to provide a working atmosphere more suited to the production of highly professional work.

The JCUD is now in a great position from which to grow. Urban design as an approach is getting unprecedented international coverage. With the JCUD's established international reputation as the leader in the field, its continued access to established academic input, growing links with practice, continued consultancy activity and injection of new young designers, the future is looking good.

Jon Cooper

Chair of the Joint Centre for Urban Design

News in brief



At present, one of the JCUD's key projects is a linked education/consultancy programme intended to build urban design expertise within West Dorset District Council. The Centre is now two years into the programme and already four council officers have successfully gained the JCUD's Certificate, and four others are nearing the end of their Diploma studies. The programme's work has focused around live projects in Bridport, West Bay and Dorchester. The innovative nature of this local authority/university link has been recognised with the prestigious central government Beacon Status award.

Jon Cooper, Alan Reeve and Tom Medcalf, together with JCUD associates Juliet Matthews and Geertje Kreuziger, have been working with Milton Keynes Council, developers Wilson Connelly and JJ Gallaghers, planning consultants Wood Frampton and David Lock Associates to prepare a development brief for Broughton Manor Farm in Milton Keynes. This is a 54ha site that forms part of the Eastern Expansion Area of Milton Keynes. The JCUD worked as design consultants and facilitators running a two-day collaborative workshop with Milton Keynes Council, the developers, local councillors and residents to identify design principles and site parameters that will now guide future development of the site.

With the successful completion of the Broughton Manor Farm workshops the JCUD has been invited to organise and run a series of collaborative design workshops for the Milton Keynes Western Expansion Area (WEA). The area will eventually house a population similar to the town of Buckingham. Working with the council, developers Genesis and Corran-Wakefield, English Partnerships and consultants RPS and David Lock Associates,

Jon, Alan and Tom will be acting as facilitators, aiming to help identify design principles that will form the basis of the development framework for the WEA.

In addition to actively working as consultants with developers and well known design and planning practices this has been a good year for the JCUD in terms of its aim of continuing to develop its links with urban design practice and getting students in touch with practitioners. Associate studio staff are providing practice links with the Civic Trust, Townscape, Gillespies, Anthony PRP Architects bringing up-to-the minute practice techniques straight in to the JCUD studios.

Spreading the urban design word has really taken off this year with the JCUD being asked to provide design training for a large number of local authorities - Haringey, Sandwell MBC, Surrey County Council, the 11 district councils contained in Surrey, South Northamptonshire DC, North Hertfordshire DC, East Hertfordshire DC, Anglesey County Council, Wychavon DC, Waltham Forest LBC, South Somerset DC and Maidstone DC.

Reviews, revalidations, people and prizes



It would be hard to imagine a busier year. Our courses have been revalidated by both the University and the RIBA/ARB, and a pending visitation from the government in the form of the Quality Assurance Agency is set to review all our activities. But these are opportunities to show the Department at its best. An exhibition organised for the RIBA/ARB visit placed the Department on display and showed work of the highest standards. Students have won many important prizes for their designs, with awards from the RIBA, Corus, Royal Academy, Archiix International and the AIA (the USA's RIBA). The excellence of our staff has also been recognised through a number of awards and we have seen notable successes in research.

We have had to say farewell to Professor Murray Fraser who is taking up a Professorship at the University of Westminster and to Jacqui Glass who is leaving to become a Lecturer in Architectural Engineering at Loughborough University - our best wishes go to them both in their new roles - and to John Stevenson, back after a period away. We have also welcomed colleagues from South Korea, Kuwait, Israel and Japan, adding to the dynamic of the School.

The months ahead promise to be exciting ones. The University has contracted international space planners DEGW to review all our accommodation and they will propose innovative designs in consultation with us. We can expect 21st-century spaces to match our forward-looking teaching and leading edge research.

Professor Mike Jenks
Acting Head, Department of Architecture

Washington - Alexandria Architecture Center

What do architecture departments from Texas, California, Louisiana, Argentina, Japan, Estonia, the Bauhaus and Oxford Brookes University have in common? They all share studio space at Virginia Tech's centre in Alexandria. The centre offers excellent resources, comfortable studios and stylish pooled spaces. Residential accommodation just 300 metres away contributes to an intense, accessible experience for students and visiting staff.

Students on the Graduate Diploma course at Oxford Brookes have been benefiting from this experience since 1985. Typically, their time is spent working in practices in the mornings - a work visa allows up to twenty hours a week - while teaching takes place in the afternoons and evenings. Some 85 graduate students and 75 master's and PhD students make up the complement in this metropolitan outpost of the Virginia State University. The centre is ideally situated in the 18th-century Old Town of Alexandria, across the Potomac and six miles from Washington DC, giving access to the resources of the lively national and international design/development/planning community of the Washington/Baltimore metropolitan region.



Rajat Gupta, Professor Sue Roaf and Manuel Fuentes

News in brief

We are pleased to announce the following staff successes. **Paul Oliver** has received the MBE, **Michael Humphreys** and **Professor Fergus Nicol** have had professorships conferred on them from the University of North London, and **Richard Rose-Casemore**, **Peter Barber** and **Guy Greenfield** have all produced competition- and prize-winning buildings.

In the last year we have organised four major international conferences: Sustainable Cities in South East Asia held in Bangkok, Thailand; Creating Sustainable Urban Environments - the 5th International Urban Planning and Environment Association Symposium, held in Christ Church, Oxford; Teachers in Architecture (TIA 2002) held in Yazd, Iran; and Building Research and Sustainability held in Jakarta, Indonesia. The organisers were **Professor Mike Jenks**, **Katie Williams**, **Professor Sue Roaf** and **Professor Fergus Nicol** respectively.

Solar city

A team of experts from Oxford Brookes University are set to help the UK meet its Kyoto targets of 12.5% reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by 2010. How? By turning Oxford into the first solar city in the UK.

The aims of the Oxford Solar Initiative (OSI) are to have 10% of all houses in Oxford using solar hot water systems by 2010. In February the OSI team, consisting of Professor Sue Roaf, Manuel Fuentes and Rajat Gupta from Oxford Brookes and members of Oxford City Council, completed a feasibility study of 700 houses. The results showed that 82% of householders were keen to put in more energy efficiency measures and a stunning 67% would like to include solar technologies in their renovation package. A £400,000 project to implement the OSI project has been put to the

Energy Savings Trust for support in conjunction with ESD and Oxford City Council.

Rajat and Manuel were both students on the master's course in Energy Efficient Building and now teach on the course. Manuel is an internationally recognised consultant on photovoltaics and Rajat is completing his PhD on developing design and planning strategies to reduce CO² emissions using a GIS-based methodology. Other students from the Energy Efficient Building course have gone on to a wide range of fascinating jobs from eco-designers to policy makers and even carbon traders. The course can be studied part-time as well as full-time and this has enabled many practising architects, engineers and physicists to join it over the years.



Architecture people

Architecture alumnus Gus Grundt, who studied at Oxford Brookes between 1964 and 1969, returned to his alma mater this year from Oslo, Norway, where he is the Chief Architect and Communications Officer for the city. Gus is responsible for organising the European Sustainable City Award for 2003. He is seen in the photo enjoying the view from the late Reginald Cave's memorial bench at Headington Hill Hall.

Oxfordshire food group celebrates

The Oxfordshire Food Group will shortly be celebrating its first year as the guest of the Department of Planning. The Department offered to host the group, which is involved with local and sustainable food issues across the county. Projects include supporting farmers' markets and small-scale food producers as well promoting sustainable agricultural practises. The Group is part of a growing local food network, which works in areas as diverse as health and education, farm diversification, rural regeneration and sustainability within the food chain.

Agenda 21 and rural economic development were major factors in bringing a number of partners including Oxford Brookes together to provide funding and support for this local food initiative. All five of Oxfordshire's district councils, the County Council and South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) are involved. To find out more, visit: www.oxfordshirelocalfood.info or contact Jacqui Mansfield, Local Food Projects Manager, on 01865 484116, email localfood@brookes.ac.uk

Jacqui Mansfield at Oxford's monthly farmers' market



All change



The last six months have been a period of unprecedented change in the planning environment. In the outside world, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill signals major changes in the planning system, with the creation of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and the eventual demise of County Structure Plans. In my role as a member of the Strategic Planning Advisory Group of SEERA, I am involved in the scoping of the nature of the new RSS for the region. A further external influence is the recent report of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Planning Education Commission, which advocates radical reform to the nature of planning education. Added to the internal re-organisation of the University and the introduction of semesters from 2004, such changes are necessitating important reviews of both our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and at the same time are generating new opportunities, and innovative new programmes.

This year has seen a major change for me personally. In April I moved more fully into my new role as Associate Dean (Research and Consultancy) for the School. Up until now I had been undertaking this role in parallel with that of Head of the Department of Planning, a post I first took up in 1980. It has been a privilege to be Head of such an excellent team of staff, and we have achieved a great deal - not least the training of approximately 1,500 planners and similar numbers in cognate areas over that period, many of whom are now in key posts in planning in the UK and overseas. I have now handed over to my colleague, Professor Georgia Butina Watson, previously Deputy Head of the Department, and I wish her all the best in this important role.

Professor John Glasson
Associate Dean (Research and Consultancy)

News in brief

Jake Piper has been undertaking an analysis of a consultation exercise carried out by the Environment Agency on the Water Framework Directive. The Directive is a major piece of European legislation to protect and enhance water resource, and is currently the object of an array of studies across the EU.

Short courses activity (both in Oxford and, increasingly, in-house in local authorities) goes from strength to strength. We have recently provided a continuing professional development programme with English Heritage, and will be undertaking training for the Planning Inspectorate.

We are pleased to welcome new staff and higher degree students. Lucy Nichol has joined the staff as a Lecturer/Research Associate in Rural Futures, Robert Brown has joined as a Lecturer in Housing, and we have eight new PhD students, including an ODPM/ESRC funded studentship in Transport Planning. We are also pleased to have been chosen by the planning consultancy, RPS, to be the recipient of two major studentships annually.

At Christmas, we celebrated the contributions of a number of staff taking retirement from the Department, including Marie Barrett, Bob Bixby, and Jenny Franklin, plus those moving onto pastures new - Martyn Pearl and Giles Darkes.

The relationship between teaching and research is a key issue in higher education and the department's Link project shows that the built environment is a fertile subject area in which to explore this complex relationship. An international conference exploring these issues takes place in September 2003 (see page 2). For further information on the project visit www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/planning/LTRC/conference/home.htm

Oxford City Council new housing residents survey

The Land Use and Transport Research Group, in collaboration with Oxford City Council, has recently completed a study of new housing developments in Oxford. The study was part of a continuing programme of research into the relationship between development location, housing choice and travel behaviour. An underlying objective of the research is the contribution that land use planning can make to reducing car-based travel.

Surveys were conducted during summer 2002 using face-to-face household interviews at a sample of properties on two new estates - The Slade off Horspath Driftway, near to the city's eastern bypass, and Rewley Road near to the rail station on the edge of the city centre.

Early results have shown that the main concern of residents on the new housing estates is the availability of children's play-space. Residents at The Slade development also expressed concern about the quality of their local bus service. Although opinion is finely balanced across all estates, residents are marginally against the issue of building on green belt land to increase the supply of housing. A small, but nonetheless significant, minority of people is interested in the option of a car-club and there is particular interest from those people living in social housing and flats. Differences in travel behaviour for the two estates are currently being analysed.

For more information of this project contact Peter Headicar (pgheadicar@brookes.ac.uk) or Tim Jones (tjones@brookes.ac.uk) at the Department of Planning.



Particular interest amongst those living in social housing and flats in the option of a car-club.



Residents' main concern is the availability of children's play-space.

A focus for our future



Oliver Wendell Holmes observed that it is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving that is important. In the case of the Department of Real Estate Management that has rarely been more relevant than it is today. It would be wrong to say that we have been standing still over the last couple of years: our revalidated and expanded undergraduate programmes and our MSc programme attest to that. But it is from where we stand now that we must see our direction for the next few years. We are constantly researching markets and changes in those markets so that we can meet the needs of an increasingly diverse professional vision. This is not easy in times of economic and political uncertainty. But in such a climate there are opportunities which, with our own particular experience and knowledge as a department, can provide a focus for our future.

The nature of the work undertaken by the chartered general practice surveyor and the building surveyor has become much less compartmentalised - no longer is it restricted to one specific activity, or even country. Our professions are becoming multi-functional and international in their activities, facilitating a holistic property service to clients. Graduates leave our programmes well-equipped to participate in the demanding advisory and decision-making roles of today's property professional. The Department's development reflects the changes taking place in the external environment. We believe that the direction in which we are moving in both our teaching and our research and consultancy work is one which continues to meet the needs of the market place.

Peter Dent
Head of Department

REM people

Mike Patrick has joined the Department as a part-time senior lecturer in valuation and investment. Mike trained as a chartered surveyor and subsequently gained an MBA from the Cranfield School of Management. He has 25 years' experience in the fund management industry and has worked mostly in operational and analytical roles concerned with the setting up and running of investment funds for equities and bonds, as well as real estate. Most recently he worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers in their real estate capital markets group.



Philip Turner is a Chartered Town Planner with 28 years of professional experience who has worked at senior level in local government and planning consultancy. Specialising in land use planning and planning practice, he has taught widely on the subject in this country and abroad. Since joining the University as a Senior Lecturer in 1997, he has taught in the Department of Planning. More recently he has been working closely with Mike Stubbs in the Department of Real Estate Management and has helped run a number of training programmes for local authorities.



Real estate in the Pacific Rim

The Pacific Rim Real Estate Society's 9th annual conference embraced a wide ranging programme which covered, among other topics, urban and rural property markets, valuation, investment, education, theory and behavioural studies. Pacific Rim markets appear on the surface to be similar in this era of mass global exposure. However it did not take long for fascinating differences to appear. The emergence of native title law in Australia, for example, has exposed major discrepancies in the current models for compensation, based on market value and economic loss, when applied to the value of traditional land title and traditional landholders.



The conference was held at the Old Customs House, Brisbane

Ann Boon, Sally Sims and Henry Chin from the Department of Real Estate Management attended the conference and presented papers on: 'The Real Estate Implications of the Changing Rural Economy', 'The Effects of Electricity Distribution Equipment on the UK Residential Property Market' and 'Macro-economic Factors affecting Office Rental Values in Southeast Asian Cities', respectively.



Sally Sims, Henry Chin and Ann Boon

The case study visit was to a riverside urban renewal scheme. Formerly a colonial sugar refining enterprise, this 4.3ha site is being redeveloped for residential use by private developers. The refinery building itself is a state heritage listed building and forms the centrepiece of the development. The unexpected visual impact, to the eye finely tuned by the UK's restrictive planning policies, is that no attempt has been made to reconcile the design of the new with the architectural qualities of the old. But it seems to work for Brisbane.

Following on from the conference, the Department is expecting visits from Professor Terry Boyd (Queensland University of Technology), Peter Elliot (University of Queensland) and Richard Reed (University of Melbourne). We expect these to generate useful information exchanges for the Department's International Land Markets Research Group.

MSc update

It is hard to believe that we are nearly half way through the first year of the MSc in Real Estate Management. On the learning front, students have completed modules in planning and development and law. To assist them to develop the practical knowledge and skills that they will soon be using in professional practice, students have undertaken work including a property market assessment and property development feasibility studies, and have presented evidence to a mock Royal Commission on urban regeneration.

Students were recently taken on a field trip to Manchester to investigate the property market, concentrating on some urban regeneration schemes in particular. Visiting speakers from our sponsoring firms have provided a further dimension to their studies.

Recruitment continues to go well, with most students having already secured graduate positions, mostly in large UK surveying practices, despite being only just half way through the course.

Edinburgh's car-free urbanism

Mike Stubbs has just completed work on the relationship between car parking policy and urban sustainability. This study, to emerge from a research programme funded by the Berkeley Homes Research Foundation, examined the recent evolution of parking policy including 'car-free urbanism' as pioneered by Edinburgh City Council. This foresees housing developments without parking provision in appropriate locations. The study sought opinion from residential occupiers on their desire for parking provision (as opposed to their car ownership). Not surprisingly people perceive a strong relationship between parking ownership and property value but Local Planning policy, the study concluded, requires a serious re-appraisal if the aspirations of government policy are to be achieved. Innovative policy regimes as currently being implemented in Edinburgh are worth future monitoring to assess their implications for achieving greater sustainability as a consequence of planning policy.

News in brief

Mike Stubbs and **Miles Keeping** have published a study examining course content in vocational property-based degree qualifications. Their work involved an appraisal of the way in which professional practice-based projects can be incorporated into undergraduate education. The work is timely as bodies such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) reappraise their educational strategies and policy. The study is published in **Planning Practice and Research**.

This year the Singapore programme anticipates its largest group of graduates. 25 students are completing their final series of modules, including the dissertation and assessment of professional competence in the 'Professional Practice Test'. In January 2003 **Vivienne Spurge** visited Singapore to orientate the students for their forthcoming PPT assessment in June. This will involve their attending two 'viva' interviews at which they will need to defend their opinions on matters of legal principles and ethical conduct applied to local property-based scenarios.

Over the last six months we have been developing links with institutions and government bureaux in southern China. As a result several collaborative projects are currently under consideration. This, together with our ongoing work in Eastern Europe, has encouraged us to establish an International Land Markets research cluster within the Department's research centre (The Oxford Centre for Real Estate Management).

An AMBA accredited MBA developed in collaboration with the Business School starts this September. This business qualification has been designed to meet the needs of the property profession by including property-related elective modules. The MBA is one of the most popular postgraduate qualifications around and last year British institutions awarded approximately 10,000 MBAs, so quality is a real consideration for students when choosing a course. AMBA's independent accreditation has become the accepted quality standard, recognised throughout education and industry, but it is held by less than a third of British business schools, making the Oxford Brookes MBAs some of the best in the country.

Problems in project management

'A house builder experienced in traditional construction decides to switch to timber frame building. Analyse the financial and technological implications of this move and propose how the change in the business and organisation should be managed.'

This is the type of problem which might face incoming students on a new MSc course in project management. It is being developed along problem-based learning principles by the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management. Other examples might involve introducing congestion charging, tackling a problem of business law, or determining why a new e-procurement system is producing disappointing results. Students will be offered some choice in the problems they tackle, allowing them to specialise in a particular context such as construction.

In some disciplines, medicine for example, established courses in which all learning takes place through the study of a carefully structured series of problems already exist. Evidence shows that students on this type of course learn nearly as much factual knowledge as they would on conventional courses, but they remember far more, are better able to apply what they have learned and develop a range of invaluable skills in the process.

The course will be for students with first degrees other than construction-related ones. With declining applications onto undergraduate construction courses, employers are already turning to such graduates and offering on the job and in-house training. Students are likely, therefore, to be in project-based jobs or interested in moving into such jobs. Initially the course will be for part-time students. Our aim is to accommodate the needs of working students. WebCT is ideal for this, allowing discussion amongst students and staff, the provision of course materials and online self-assessment and assessment testing.

A crucial area for us now is working out suitable problems and background briefings, and we intend to seek help from employers in developing these. Demand for able individuals in the industry is so strong at present that we also expect to find employers willing to offer scholarships.

Structures Lab



The University's Structures Laboratory has facilities for the structural testing of building materials and small structures, such as these brick arches which are part of a final year student's project. Materials suitable for testing in the lab include concrete, steel, timber, masonry, soil and rock. The lab can also be used to test the air-tightness of building cladding units.



Part L of the new Building Regulations (Thermal Performance) requires buildings to achieve prescribed levels of air-tightness. This is likely to have a significant impact on the design and detailing of industrial and commercial building

envelope systems. The test rig has been developed to measure the air-tightness of joints in cladding systems that can be used for performance certification and product development, as well as research. The rig is available for performance testing and certification of proprietary and bespoke cladding systems.

For further information please contact Ray Ogden, email rgogden@brookes.ac.uk

Plans to go places

Following on from a successful revalidation of our Construction Management degree programmes we are launching a number of new initiatives. Input from the construction industry has always informed our developments and so it is appropriate that we should build on those links and create deep and long-term relationships - partnering, as Sir Michael Latham, now Chair of the Construction Industry Training Board, may have put it.

We have embarked therefore upon building closer partnerships with a number of participating

Constructing the future



Construction is at the forefront of change management. We change the face of our cities and the environments in which people live, work and play; and we change ourselves, who does what, and how things are done.

Since the last edition of *be*, a number of changes have taken place within the Department. Marstan Street has become Assistant Dean (Academic) for the School and I have been appointed Acting Head of the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management.

I joined the then Oxford Polytechnic in 1990 from a career working with and for central and local government and in private practice consultancy, surveying thousands of properties and preparing extensive planned preventive maintenance and upgrading programmes. I thoroughly enjoy working here with friendly colleagues and a terrific group of students, and find the emphasis we place on students' learning extremely rewarding.

We have embarked on a programme to reach out and build upon our relationships with industrial partners near to home and further afield. For instance, we will be repeating our 'bridge-building' projects with local schools, which were reported on in the last edition. We will continue to discuss with schools and employers how we may best meet their needs. And we continue to grow internationally too. Our partnership with the FH Joanneum in Graz, featured in the last edition, is a fine example and this year we shall be visiting the European Capital of Culture with a group of students. We also have plans to strengthen our partnerships with high quality institutions in Africa, Asia and Australasia. We welcome enquiries from anyone wanting to join us in this exciting future.

Brian Wood

Acting Head, Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management

CECM People

Mu'tasime Abdel-Jaber has been working as a postgraduate in the Department for the past four years investigating the behaviour of semi-rigid connections in light steel frames. He successfully defended his research at a recent examination and will be awarded a PhD in the Autumn. He is the second member of his family to undertake research in the Department; his brother, Ma'en, completed research on strengthening reinforced concrete structures some two years ago.

Bob Branch continues his excellent work as Admissions Tutor, welcoming potential recruits to our courses, while also developing a new foundation programme designed to attract and enable students from varied backgrounds to study with us.

Michael Hill is the contact point for employers offering career opportunities to students for a 'year out' industrial placement and/or a position on graduation.

Paul Jenkins becomes Field Chair for our undergraduate programmes in Civil Engineering, Environmental Geotechnology, Geotechnics and Water Resources.

Nick Spencer-Chapman is taking the lead in creating a new postgraduate programme designed to help people move into professional careers in construction management (see Problems in project management on this page). This builds on our successful Project Management courses which have been meeting the needs of industry for over a decade now, leading to professional qualification.

PUBLICATIONS

The Joint Centre for Urban Design is updating *Responsive Environments: A Manual for Designers*, to address both eighteen years' experience of using it since its first publication, and the multiplicity of new issues which have arisen during that period. Both these factors have strongly reinforced our conviction about the validity of the book's approach.

Emeritus Professor Ian Bentley's book *Urban Transformations: Power, People and Urban Design* has finally been brought out as an affordable paperback, and reviewers have seen it as giving a still stronger theoretical underpinning to the Joint Centre for Urban Design's *Responsive Environments* approach.

Professor Georgia Butina Watson and Emeritus Professor Ian Bentley are putting the finishing touches to their new book *Identity by Design*, to be published by Architectural Press, in time for the next academic year. There has been enthusiastic student response to the seminars through which the book has been developed, so we hope it will help focus designers' thinking about place-identity - one of the most deeply felt but perhaps least understood urban design issues of our time.

Emeritus Professor Ian Bentley and Graham Smith are now well into production of the manuscript for their *Modernist Urban Design*, to be published by Architectural Press next year. They say they are bringing this out to show how the Joint Centre for Urban Design's approach draws its roots from the modernist design tradition, and to dispute the view that *Responsive Environments* itself is somehow a nostalgic anti-modernist enterprise.

Graham Smith contributed to the chapter 'Homezones and Traffic Calming: implications for cyclists' in *Planning for Cycling* (2002) ed Hugh McLintock.



Brian Wood's first book, *Building Care*, examines a range of alternative approaches to building maintenance and facilities management.

A new book by **Miles Keeping and David Shiers**, dealing with the relationship between property and the environment is to be published in summer 2003 by Blackwell Science. Whilst there are now a great many excellent sources of information focusing on specific aspects of property-related environmental issues, for those coming to the subject for the first time such material can be hard to follow. This basic 'primer' makes no such demands upon the reader - all that is required is an interest in learning more about this increasingly important field of study.

RESEARCH ROUNDUP

The last government Research Assessment Exercise placed us as the top new university in the built environment subject area, and over the last six months we have been busy building on the 4 rating we achieved. As well as the important work of writing papers and books, supporting research students and undertaking consultancy and research projects, we have had some major successes in funding for new research.

Members of the **Oxford Centre for Sustainable Development** (OCSD) have recently secured funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) to participate in



three new research consortia comprising academic institutions and industry partners. They are undertaking research in: Sustainable Urban Environments (led by Oxford Brookes University, total funding £1.75 million); Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors (£503k); and Adaptation Strategies for Climate Change in the Urban Environment (with colleagues in the **Department of Planning**, £390k). OCSD's Technology group has also won funding from the Department of Trade and Industry, with new projects supported through the Partners in Innovation Programme (PII) looking into levels of compliance in building regulations (£50k) and thin-joint glued brickwork (£54k). OCSD had also been collaborating with the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction Management, using its pressure test rig to investigate the air-tightness of cladding systems developed by Corus (see page 7).

In addition to their work with OCSD on Climate Change and the Urban Environment the **Department of Planning's** research activities continue to flourish, including new contracts with Magnox Electric on the Socio-Economic Impacts of the Decommissioning of Nuclear Power Stations, with the Environment Agency, Sport England, Countryside Agency, ODPM and several more.

Securing this funding means that our research teams will be leading and undertaking internationally significant studies in these subject areas for years to come.

Together with the **Joint Centre for Urban Design**, the Department has launched a new research group, the Townscape and Heritage Research Unit (THRU). For further information see page 3.

On 24 March 2003, a major research report *Enterprising Oxford: the growth of the Oxfordshire high-tech economy* was launched at the Royal Society in London, in the presence of Lord Sainsbury, Minister for Science and Innovation. The report was produced by the **Oxfordshire Economic Observatory** (OEO), established in 2001 as an independent research centre dedicated to undertaking world class research into the knowledge economy of advanced regions. The OEO is a joint venture between the School of Geography and Environment at the University of Oxford, and the Department of Planning at Oxford Brookes. Key Brookes staff, and co-authors of the report, are **Professor John Glasson, Professor James Simmie**, and **Andrew Chadwick**.

Why is the report called *Enterprising Oxford*? The answer relates to Oxfordshire's creative and successful economy. It is now one of Europe's leading centres of enterprise, innovation and knowledge. At the end of 2001, there were over 1,400 high-tech firms in the county, employing some 37,000 people (approximately 12% of all employees in the county). Between 1991 and 2000, Oxfordshire experienced a faster rate of growth in high-tech employment than any other English county. The report explains the key elements in this virtuous circle of activity. A sister volume, *Enterprising Oxford: the anatomy of the Oxfordshire high-tech economy* documents the nature, growth and distribution of the high-tech sectors, including biotechnology, motor sports, medical instrumentation, computing, software and computer services, publishing and other R+D activities.

For further information about anything featured in this edition of **be**, or to be added to or deleted from our mailing list, please contact:

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