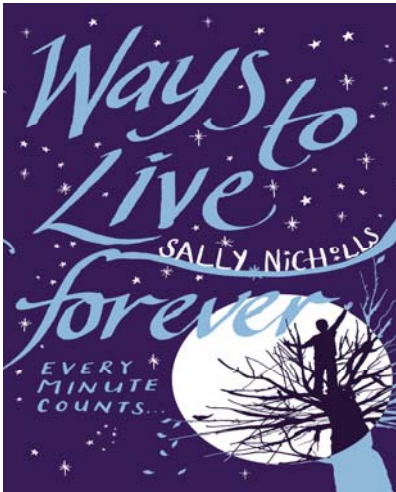




February 2008



Sally Nicholls



Bath Spa Graduate Wins Children's Book Prize

A recent graduate of Bath Spa's MA course in Writing for Young People has won the prestigious Waterstone's Children's Book Prize. 24-year-old Sally Nicholls received the award at a ceremony in London for her debut novel, *Ways to Live Forever*.

Sally beat off strong competition from eight other shortlisted authors to gain the prize, worth £5,000. Also on the shortlist was another Bath Spa writing graduate, Marie-Louise Jensen, for her first novel, *Between Two Seas*.

Sally Nicholls became a student on the Writing for Young People course in 2005. Sally's book, *Ways to Live Forever*, was published last month by Scholastic and is aimed at teenage readers. It is a moving, tender but also darkly humorous and courageous story about love and loss. The novel has a deceptively simple style and is told in the voice of 11-year-old Sam, who is dying of leukaemia.

While on her course at Bath Spa Sally won a prize for the writer showing the most potential. She was born on Teesside and now lives in London, where she is writing her second novel.

Sally said: "I am so excited to have won the Waterstone's Children's Book Prize. The experience has all felt very surreal, not just having my first novel published, but hearing how much my book has affected and moved the judges. There were some amazing novels on the shortlist, so it's a real honour to have won".

Julia Green, course leader at Bath Spa, is delighted about her former student's award: "For both Sally and Marie-Louise to be shortlisted was a remarkable achievement. For Sally to then win the Waterstone's prize is even more fantastic. It's richly deserved as both are wonderful new writers. I also think it is a real mark of the success of the MA course here at Bath Spa University."

New Director for Bath Spa Live

Martin Pople has taken up his post as the first Director of Bath Spa Live. It marks another step forward in the University's ambition to become the region's premier arts university. The appointment grows out of continuing success for the School of Music and Performing Arts in attracting increasing numbers of students, in developing new courses, in building new facilities and in winning national recognition as part of the £4.5m Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning.



Martin Pople

Bath Spa *Live* will provide a professional producing and promoting framework for an inspiring range of work in music, dance and drama. The new Director plans to 'import' leading practitioners - not just to perform, but also to contribute to the creative and professional development of students through workshops, residencies and commissions. He will also 'export' the best of the resulting work as a distinctive contributor to the region's cultural life.

It is significant that Martin Pople does not come from a conventional academic background, but has much experience as a performer, producer and manager in music and theatre. His last job was with the Clore Leadership Programme in London, which nurtures the skills and experience of future leaders in the cultural sector.

The programme will not be confined to the campus venues of the University Theatre and the Michael Tippett Centre, but will be presented in the most appropriate space for the event, whether in Bath or beyond. Supporting Martin and his team of arts professionals will be students from two new foundation degrees in technical production and arts management.



Professor Simon Haslett

Warning on Severn Barrage from Bath Spa Scientist

A scientist from Bath Spa University has discussed concerns about the planned Severn Barrage at a major environmental conference in Canada. Professor Simon Haslett, Head of Geography in Bath Spa's School of Science and the Environment, says Canadian scientists are alarmed about the scheme from their own experience of harnessing tidal power. He warns that Britain must not make the same mistakes.

Professor Haslett was addressing the annual conference of the Atlantic Geoscience Society in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He gave a briefing on the UK government proposals to build a barrage across the Severn Estuary. His presentation was part of a special session on Canada's own experiment with tidal power in the Bay of Fundy. This has the highest tidal range in the world, even higher than the Severn Estuary.

Canadian scientists at the conference told him the Bay of Fundy scheme had caused serious environmental damage, so they were shocked that a Severn Barrage was even being considered and urged the UK Government to think again.

Professor Haslett says Britain must take heed: "The Canadians have been experimenting with tidal power generation in the Bay of Fundy for many years, building a barrage across one of its tributaries as long ago as 1984. The consequences have convinced them that building a barrage is



inefficient, has many undesirable environmental impacts, and is unsightly. The UK needs to learn from their experience and not make the same mistakes”.

According to Professor Haslett, the Canadian barrage has proved inefficient because it can only generate electricity on the falling tide, rather like hydroelectric power from reservoirs. Similarly, the barrage acts like a dam, causing siltation of sediment and ponding of water upstream, which leads to infilling of the bay or estuary and the loss of tidal wetlands, such as salt marshes and mud flats.

Professor Haslett wants to ensure that the UK does not make any hasty decisions. “For the Canadians the idea of a barrage is now history and doesn’t even get raised as an option during tidal power debates. It’s so old hat they are amazed the UK is even considering it. If the Canadians are right we shouldn’t even waste any time and millions of pounds of taxpayers’ money considering a barrage. We should perhaps move straight on to assessing other methods of generating electricity from the tides”.

Elaine and Susan Help Time Team Dig Up the Past



Dr Elaine Chalus

Two historians linked to Bath Spa, Dr Elaine Chalus and Susan Elizabeth Caola, were involved in an episode of the Channel 4 archaeology show Time Team. Elaine, who is a senior lecturer in the School of Historical and Cultural Studies, acted as historical consultant for Tony Robinson and the rest of the Time Team at a dig in the village of Hunstrete, near Bath. Susan gave the Time Team full access to all her research material, including some from unpublished sources.

The episode, called *Keeping up with the Georgians* and screened on Sunday 17th February, delved into the mystery of an 18th century mansion which was demolished, leaving almost no trace, some 50 years after its construction was initiated by the Popham family.

The programme was inspired by Susan Elizabeth Caola’s book, *Hunstrete, Truth and Legend: The Story of a Country Estate* (2003) ISBN: 0-9546239-0-8. Susan became a student at Bath Spa in the 1970s, when it was the College of Higher Education. She gained a teaching qualification in Rural Science, with History & Geography as her second subject, and later returned here to undertake an in-service degree in education. Susan spent four years researching the Hunstrete estate, culminating in her book.

Elaine’s role with the Time Team, as an expert on the Georgian period, was to hunt through a mountain of documents to make sense of the tantalising clues uncovered by previous searches for the Hunstrete ruins. She found it a fascinating experience and says: “It was a real privilege. One of the joys of working with the Time Team is that you get to translate documentary evidence into reality, making history come alive. And so much of what we found beneath the ground was unexpected.”



Susan's book can be purchased by contacting her at s.e.caola@talk21.com or from Hunstrete House Hotel.



Student Volunteers Lend a Hand

Dozens of Bath Spa students have been giving up their spare time to help people in the local community. They took part in special volunteer days throughout the second half of January, organised by the University's Volunteer Challenge Co-ordinator Ed Stevens.

Four of the five projects were fully booked, involving a total of 36 volunteers. Activities ranged from clearing brambles from fields and hedgerows at Bath City Farm, and scrub clearance at Stephen's Churchyard in Lansdown, to building a shed for exercising dogs at Bath Cats and Dog Home.

Another group of student volunteers helped to run elections for the UK Youth Parliament. They provided assistance with setting up and manning polling stations in all participating schools, colleges and youth projects, in conjunction with Democratic Action for Bath and NE Somerset Youth. They also took ballot boxes to the Guildhall and helped count the votes.

Ed says he's pleased with the number of volunteers and their enthusiasm for the work: "As well as helping local organisations, these one-off projects give students the opportunity to use their initiative, solve problems, try their hand at something new and develop their teamwork skills. Most of all, though, the days should be fun."

Feedback has been excellent. All the students who joined in said they would do so again in future. Five more volunteer days, known as "Quickies", are now being planned for up to Easter.

Pupils Meet Children's Laureate



The Children's Laureate Michael Rosen has enthralled pupils and their teachers in Wiltshire with a visit to their school. He was invited by the Vibrant School Project (VSP), which is a collaborative venture between Bath Spa University School of Education and Wiltshire County Council.

Michael is an internationally celebrated writer, broadcaster and performer, best known for books like *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* and *Don't Put Mustard in the Custard*. At Nursted Primary School in Devizes he met about 50 children and entertained them with stories and poems about his childhood.



Michael was appointed Children's Laureate last summer for two years to promote a love of reading and literature. He sees the role as "being an ambassador for fun with books".

Nursted is one of 25 Wiltshire primaries involved in VSP, which seeks to help schools forge their own direction towards a more vibrant learning community.



Shaun Dances His Way to Success

Former EastEnders star Shaun Williamson gave the audience a night to remember when he brought his cabaret act to the Students' Union. Shaun, who played Barry Evans in the long-running BBC soap, is one of the biggest names ever booked for the Friday Flux party event.

Shaun has found new TV fame playing himself in the popular Ricky Gervais comedy *Extras*. For Bath Spa students it was cheesy fun all the way from the moment he came on stage to the EastEnders theme tune. He sang a lot of songs, including *Mustang Sally* in a duet with Students' Union Vice President David Jones.

During his hour-long show Shaun also organised a dance contest, strutted his stuff with everybody and even did a stint serving drinks behind the bar. David said: "It was a fantastic night, he's a great personality."