



# Sparks

Issue no. **13**

*In this issue*

**December**

University of Sunderland's Staff Magazine

December 1992



Wearside's famous sons and daughters  
get the honours at University's first  
-ever degree ceremonies . . . .Bosnian

student arrives at Sunderland . . . . Rugby scores big hit in  
the classroom . . . . £1 million blitz on hazardous chemicals

. . . . Lollipop Man goes back to school . . . .

Swimmers get a watery welcome . . . .



## **SPARKS IN BRIEF:**

**WISH ME LUCK AS YOU WAVE ME GOODBYE:** Voice Systems Manager Vera Collins bids her farewell on December 16 when she retires from the University after 11 years...**POLAND BECKONS:** Dr David Abel and a team from the Ecology Centre are off to Poland

after being awarded a £200,000 EC grant to work on environmental improvements....**PARLIAMENTARY PLAUDITS:** Nigel Forman, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education praised the University's links with Eastern Europe in a speech to the European Community's Training Conference....**TWIN TOWN:** Professor Margaret Attack, Director of the School of Social and International Studies, and Anne Johnson from the Continuing Education Unit were among the guests at the 40th anniversary celebrations of Sunderland's twinning with St Nazaire in France....**HEALTHY**

**PAIR:** Lecturer Nigel Watson joined forces with Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley for the London launch of the Wellness Forum aimed at making employers take better care of their staff. **AND FINALLY....**This is the last Sparks before Christmas and for 1992 so it only remains for us to wish all our readers a happy festive season. Have a great time and we'll see you in the New Year with a new look and the latest news on what's happening around campus.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY 1993.**

"Sparks", the staff magazine of the University of Sunderland, aims to take a lively look at life and work in the University and to inform readers of current and future developments. If you have any suggestions for features or articles or would like to write a letter on any of the issues raised, please contact the Editor, Gillian Watson (ext.2099). Please note however that the Editor's decision is final with regard to the contents of the magazine. "Sparks" is designed by Vicki Taylor/Sandra Robinson and produced by the Corporate Affairs Department. Photography is by George Bosnyak. The opinions reported in "Sparks" do not necessarily reflect the policy of the University of Sunderland.

# Better by Degrees!

*Heard the one about the pop star, the judge and the newspaper magnate?*

*They were just three in a long line of prestigious people and 1,600 graduates honoured at the University's first-ever awards ceremonies held at the Sunderland Empire in November.*



**FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW** - Pop star Dave Stewart steps out in style for press photographers after receiving his Honorary Fellowship at a special ceremony at Langham Tower.

**M**usical genius and former Eurythmics star Dave Stewart started the celebrations with a bang - appropriately on Guy Fawkes Day - when he made an emotional return to his birthplace to be made an Honorary Fellow of the University for his contribution to the music industry.

His wife Siobhan Fahey, one half of that other famous pop duo Shakespear's Sister, travelled up from London to share Dave's big moment along with the Stewart relatives who still live on Wearside.

It was a memorable occasion for many reasons - not least because the attention of the nation's media seemed trained on Langham Tower for the day!

Hot on the heels of the Stewart occasion came a further six award ceremonies and more honours for five eminent men and women with important Sunderland connections.



## STUDENTS OF THE FUTURE GET IN QUICK TO SIGN UP FOR SUNDERLAND

Sixty teenagers from Doncaster have officially declared their intention to study for a degree - possibly at the University.

The Year-11 pupils from three schools made their commitment to work towards a university place as part of the nationwide HiPACT scheme, which aims to motivate children in schools without a tradition of pupils going on to higher education.

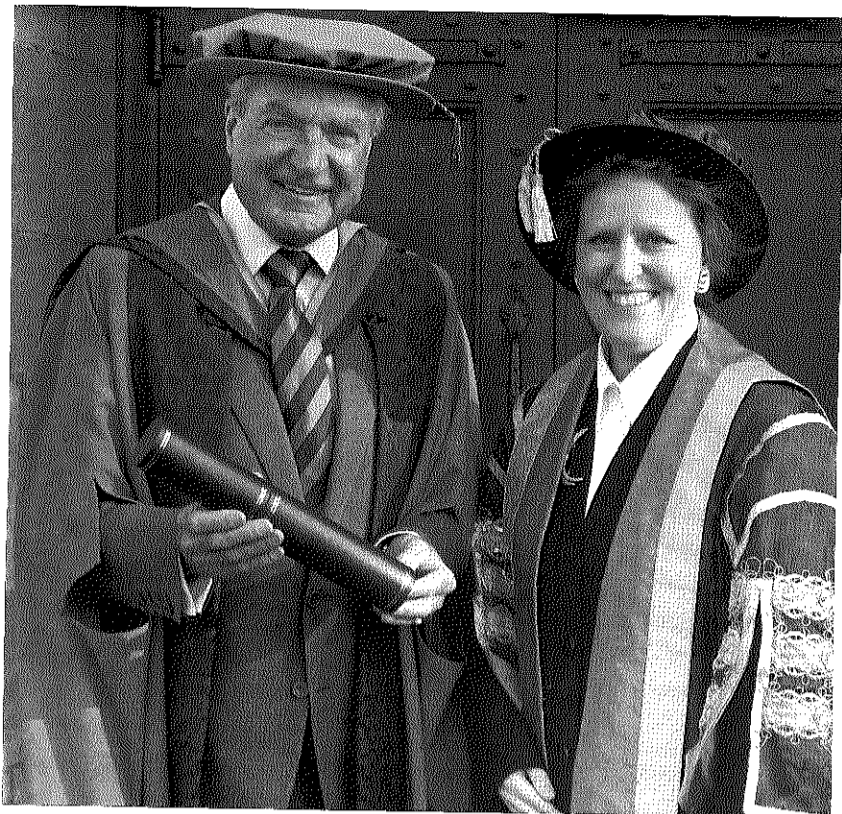
The 15 and 16-year-olds first spent a week in Sunderland during the summer to discover what the University and City had to offer.

Then they made a return visit to register their intention to complete the work needed over the next two years to allow them entry into higher education. Said Anne Johnson, the University's HiPACT representative: "It is very important that we encourage young

people to see what an attractive option studying for a degree really is.

"The pupils were very impressed by their week in Sunderland and we hope to be welcoming some of them as students in the near future."

**HATS OFF TO HIGHER EDUCATION:** School pupils from Doncaster stage their own graduation day during their visit to the University.



**PROUD MOMENT - University Vice Chancellor Dr Anne Wright congratulates Sir Tom Cowie after presenting him with his Honorary Doctorate in Business Administration.**

**W**earside businessman Sir Tom Cowie was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Business Administration (HonDBA), Judge Myrella Cohen an Honorary Doctorate of Laws (HonLLD), and newspaper publisher Sir Richard Storey an Honorary Doctorate of Letters (HonDLitt).

North West Durham MP Hilary Armstrong and educationalist Sue Hurley were made Honorary Fellows. To mark an incredible year for Wearside, Honorary Fellowships were also awarded to the City and Sunderland Football Club. In return, the Club declared November

15 "University Day" and 4,000 students and staff flocked to Roker Park to see the team in action against Leicester City.

In line with the University's new status, this year's degree celebrations were bigger and better than ever before.

The Empire came alive with the sound of the University's processional fanfare, penned by Sunderland-born composer Edward Gregson and played to perfection by a brass quintet from the Northern Sinfonia.

The University's ceremonial glass mace - designed and manufactured by Phoenix Glass with the help of ceramics and glassware student Rebecca Oliver - also made its grand debut at the head of every procession.

Mace bearer Phil Henry - more widely known as Senior Assistant Academic Registrar - had two more reasons to be proud, graduating with a Masters in Business Administration on the same day as his wife Deborah was awarded an In-Service Diploma with Distinction. Lecturer Steve Farrow's wife Ruth was also up there collecting her Bachelor of Education degree.

## REVOLUTIONARY RESEARCH INTO BRAIN DRAIN

New research into the effects of metals on the brain is being carried out by a crack trio of University scientists.

Dr Bob Pullen, senior lecturer in Health Sciences, and his colleagues Dr Tony Markham and Dr John Lough, have embarked on the three-year project after being awarded a prestigious £100,000 grant by the Wellcome Trust. They competed against scientists

from around the world to win the award and will examine how the brain manages to control exposure to a whole spectrum of different metals including aluminium, zinc and manganese.

The research is particularly topical, coming at a time when aluminium is emerging as a factor in the onset of dementia and iron a contributor in some cases of Parkinsons Disease.

As principal investigator on the project, Dr Pullen will report his findings to Wellcome every year. He said: "Ten years ago, no-one saw lead as a problem but many people now recognise its dangers for the brain.

"If I can find out how and why metals are toxic, it will give us further insights into solving neurological problems."

## Diamonds are Forever

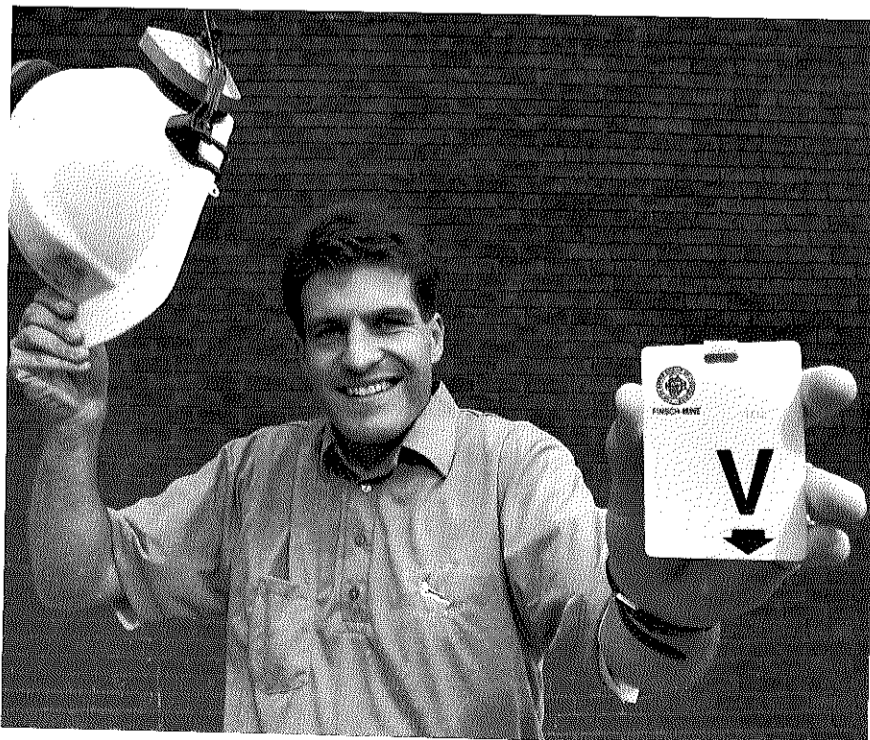
Civil engineering student Rob Hartley has returned from the trip of a lifetime visiting the world's richest diamond mines.

The month-long South African tour was his prize for winning the prestigious 1992 Leonard Clugston Award, open to young members of the Institute of Quarrying. Rob, who is in his third year, had to submit a 500-word plan of how he would use the £1,000 award and undergo a series of intensive interviews.

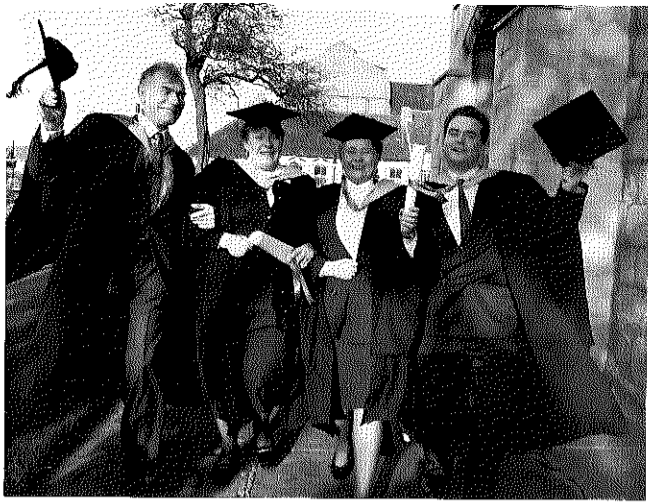
He beat off stiff competition from around the country and his reward included a visit to the world's deepest quarry.

Said Rob: "It was a fantastic trip, the extraction industry in South Africa is on a massive scale compared to Britain.

"I learned a lot and saw some incredible sights."

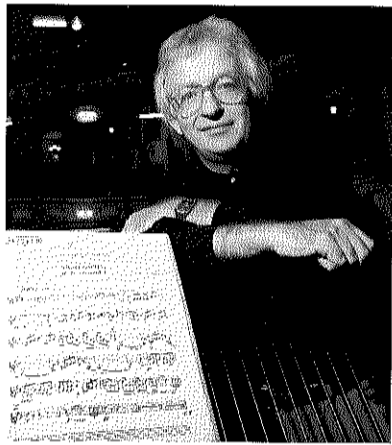


**GLITTERING PRIZE: Rob Hartley with his security pass to the diamond mines of South Africa.**



**KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY:** Husband and wife Brian and Diana Kemp, their daughter Christine Kemp-Hall and son-in-law Christopher Kemp-Hall were all awarded the BEd. in Design and Technology.

**O**ther success stories included Mary Barker who took the finals for her BA in Information Technology while she was in labour with her daughter! Former teacher Doris Brown became a Bachelor of Fine Art - at the age of 70! And BSc Environmental Studies student Matthew Clark collected his degree a year late, having completed a 5,000-mile charity cycle ride to India in aid of Sunderland's Spina Bifida Association. Now it's all over for another year but most people agree - the University of Sunderland's first Academic Awards are going to be a hard act to follow!



**SERENADE FOR SUNDERLAND:** Composer Edward Gregson, who was born on Wearside, with his original score for the University fanfare.



## Music to their Ears

People who are deaf and physically disabled can now experience the joys of music thanks to pioneering work done at the University.

New techniques created by the University's Enabling Music Project aim to give the profoundly deaf a form of enjoyment similar to that of hearing music, using advanced visual colour graphics and tactile 'touch' systems. Music specially processed to give the 'cleanest' possible sound has also been produced for the moderately deaf and the hard of hearing.

Those with physical disabilities work with computers and specially-designed equipment to help them compose, arrange and play their own music. "Physical disabilities can prevent

people playing conventional musical instruments and can deny them the opportunity to prepare pieces of music containing their own individual expression," said Gordon Dalgarno, Senior Honorary Research Fellow.

"Our goal is for musical ability to be the only handicap to musical composition," he added.

Gordon has already been working on compositions with physically handicapped children from the Barbara Priestman Special School in Sunderland.

**TINKLING THE IVORIES:** Gordon Dalgarno puts Karen Chambers from Sunderland's Barbara Priestman Special School through her musical paces.

## WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY...

CAR designers of the future are learning the tricks of the trade on the latest hi-tech equipment in one of the most sophisticated design studios in the country - on the University campus. The first students on the unique Automotive Design and Manufacture degree course are currently hard at work in their new studio base in Edinburgh Building which features computer-aided design and manufacture, computer robotics, engine and body-dynamics labs.

The design studio has been equipped with the help of local firms Nissan, Vickers, Grove Worldwide, Artix and Komatsu who are all backing the course - the first of its kind in the UK.

It gives students the chance to master all aspects of modern car manufacturing from design idea to production and will be of direct benefit to the increasing number of automotive manufacturers in the North East.

"The degree is geared towards producing graduates who will be able to go straight into the car industry," said Course Leader Stan Oliver.

"Our design studio gives students the chance to work on the latest equipment being used by industry leaders."

## WATCH THE BIRDY - FREE!

**BIRDWATCHERS** can "spot" in picturesque surroundings without it costing a penny under a special arrangement between the University and Washington Waterfowl Park.

The free offer is available to all staff and students although accompanying family members will have to pay.

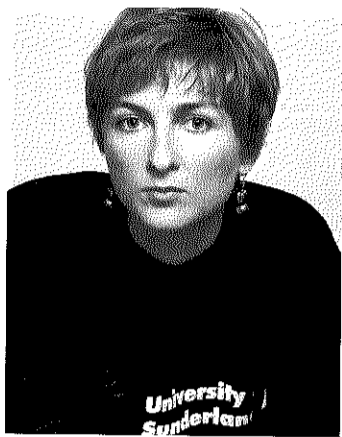
Students wishing to visit the park should produce their current Student Union identity card, complete with photo.

Staff wanting identity cards can apply to the University Secretary's office. A passport-sized photograph is needed.

# Irena finds safe haven in Sunderland

The war and bloodshed of crisis-torn Yugoslavia may seem a million miles away from Wearside - but the terrible situation is uppermost in the mind of one particular University student.

She is Irena Mujacic, a 28-year-old cultural studies student who is trying to start a new life after leaving her home in northern Bosnia. Although she left her homeland over a year ago before the troubles hit,



**NEW START** - Bosnian student Irena Mujacic is appealing to the University to help those left behind in her war-torn homeland.

"I watch the news and see the desperate situation. My home has gone and there are people without clothes and food, babies are maimed and bleeding. It is very painful for me.

"You have no idea what it feels like, the not knowing. I go to sleep thinking of my people, I wake up thinking of them. It is the most horrible feeling imaginable."

But some elements of her new life in Sunderland remind her of the halcyon times she once had at home.

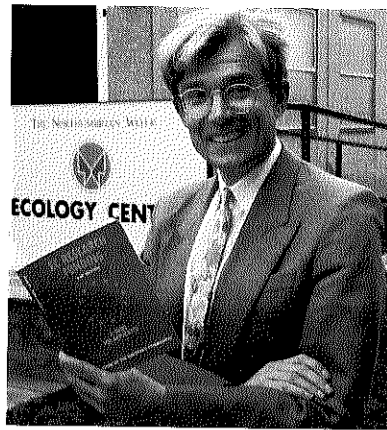
"I really miss the sea so I'm glad the University is near the North Sea and it is very cold here, though not quite as cold as Yugoslavia."

her thoughts are with the many relatives and friends left behind in the debilitated country and she wasted no time in setting up an appeal fund with the help of the Student Union.

Irena, a professor in Yugoslav literature and a former Sarajevo radio actress, was keen to continue her studies and heard about the University's cultural and textual studies course through a lecturer at the University of London.

She said: "Everyone has been so kind and made me feel so welcome. I am enjoying my studies although I have to work very hard, first to translate then understand.

"But I cannot put thoughts of home out of my mind. My mother and sister are living in Germany as refugees but my father is still in Bosnia. I ask him to write regularly just so I know he is still alive.



## OFF TO BRUSSELS

George Chabrzyk from the Ecology Centre has departed the University for the European Parliament in Brussels where he has been awarded a prestigious fellowship to advise Euro MPs on scientific issues.

Dr. Chabrzyk, whose academic background is in biology and ecology, has spent the past two years developing the University's scientific links with Europe.

One of only four recipients in the whole of Europe, he will be taking a year's leave of absence but will be keeping the University up to date with his findings.

**EUROPEAN CONNECTION:** Dr Chabrzyk does some last minute EC research before his trip.

## Joe's Valuable Lesson

Joe Elliot had a baptism of fire with his first teaching job after leaving university. Working in a secure unit for adolescent girls, he was sworn at, spat upon, hit over the head with a chair - and that was just on

the first day! But he stuck it out and says the experience taught him the most valuable lesson of all - that preventing disruption and conflict, rather than responding to it, is the key to harmonious relationships. Now Joe - from the University's School of Education - is aiming to pass on the same

interpersonal and organisational skills to today's student teachers.

He is running three-day courses of lecture and workshop activities to help students appraise their attitudes and skills, and consider various approaches to working with young people.

Joe can be contacted on ext. 2332 for further details.

## £1 MILLION BLITZ ON HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS

A major University research project to protect workers against hazardous biochemicals led by Professor Fred Rowell and another North East scientist has just won £1 million Government backing. The project, to find a fast and efficient way to warn workers about hazardous biochemicals in the air of biological detergent and antibiotic factories, is being spearheaded by Dr Rob Cumming, Principal Lecturer in Biotechnology at the University of Teesside and Professor Rowell of the School of Health Sciences.

The £1 million three-year research grant comes from the Department of Trade and

Industry's Chemicals and Biotechnology division.

It will allow the North East Biotechnology Centre - the umbrella organisation for joint scientific activities between Sunderland and Teesside Universities in the field of biotechnology - to build on earlier work in monitoring airborne chemicals. Working closely with the industries involved and with Government laboratories, including the DTI's environmental technology laboratories at Warren Spring, the two leading North East academics intend to develop sensors which can detect and measure the level of hazardous biochemicals in the workplace environ-

ment. These will give instant warning of dangerous exposure level.

Dr Cumming said: "We are working with biotech industries that produce biological washing powders and antibiotics, like penicillin, which obviously benefit society.

"Workers, however, can develop allergic responses such as rashes, asthma or sneezing if they breathe in the chemicals produced and our project will hopefully provide early warning when the air they are breathing represents a hazard," he added.

Professor Rowell said: "Staff in these industries often have to wear cumbersome 'space suits' to reduce the risk of exposure. We will be developing a sophisticated biochemical warning system, to sound an alarm when dangerous substances are present in the atmosphere and sensitive individual lapel badges, to monitor every worker's exposure level.

"We hope to establish new standards that can be accepted not only in the UK, but also throughout the European Community."

The research will be carried out in conjunction with the DTI's environmental technology laboratories at Warren Spring, Stevenage: the Centre for Applied Microbiological Research: the Laboratory of the Government Chemist in London and the North East Biotechnology Centre.



**BIOLOGICAL BLITZERS** - Professor Rowell (left) and Professor Cumming at work on their £1 million research project.

# Stop!

## Lollipop Man goes back to School

Popular "Lollipop" man Bob Sephton, 61, showed off another side to his talents when he turned teacher to help local primary school children learn to read.

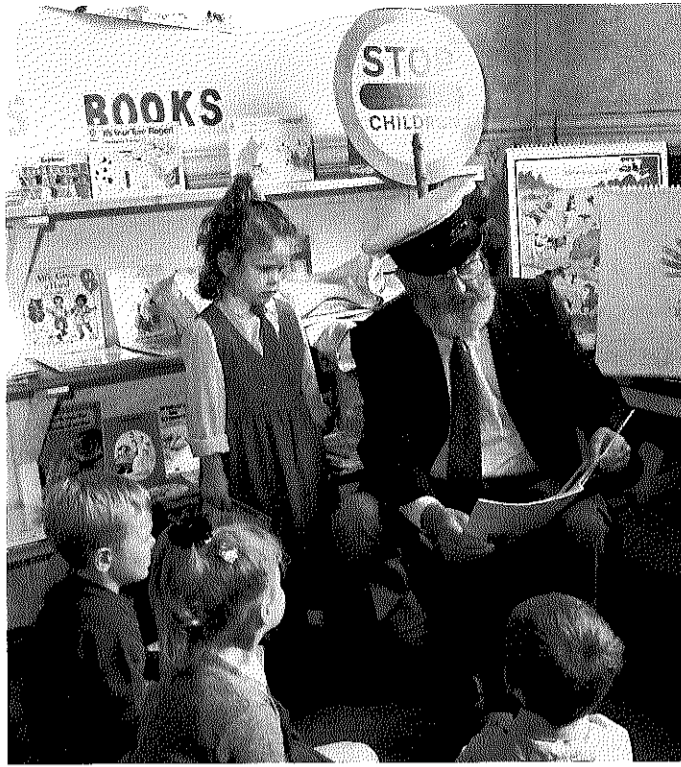
Bob is one of the volunteers who took up the University's invitation to go back to school and help four and five-year-olds develop their reading skills.

The University's School of Education joined forces with Pallion and Southwick primary schools and Hylton Castle Infants for the unique project.

The volunteers, who come from all walks of life underwent specialist training, and are due to start work in the schools after Christmas.

Said Project Leader Jane Arthurs: "One-to-one reading tuition is vital in the early years and schools welcome the assistance of trained volunteers.

"We heard from people of all ages but the project seemed particularly appealing to mature people with time to spare."



**STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN:** Lollipop Man Bob Sephton teaches a group of young bookworms from Pallion Primary School, Waverley Terrace, Sunderland.

## IN THE SWIM

Everyone was in the swim as the University's plush new-look Sports Centre received its official opening on October 29.

Superfit Chairman of the Governors Ken Douglas was first to test the waters along with our very own "water babies" from the University Nursery.

Members of Sunderland Sub-Aqua Club then went in at the deep end to do the honours of unveiling the commemorative plaque - underwater, naturally!

The former cramped building directly behind Wearmouth Hall has been completely transformed into a two-storey fitness centre to be proud of.

The four-lane swimming pool has been extended to a full 25 metres, complete with viewing gallery for up to 100 spectators, and a brand-new fitness room equipped with the latest weight training machinery manufactured by leading sports company Sportesse. There is also a new multi-purpose room fitted with jogging, stair-climbing and rowing machines for cardio-vascular training.

A new reception area offers an even warmer welcome to users.

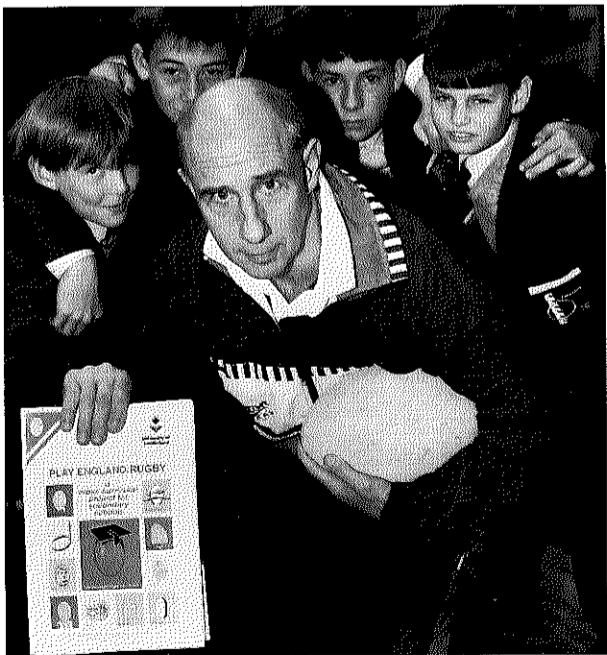
The new-look is the joint result of work by the University, the City Council and the Sports Council.

The new facilities are so impressive that there has been a flood of applications for membership from both staff and students wanting to get fit.



**WATERY WELCOME:** Members of Sunderland Sub-Aqua Club declare the swimming pool in the University's new-look Sports Centre officially open.

**HEADS TOGETHER NOW:** Tracksuited Tony Butlin uses rugby to demonstrate some of the finer points of the National Curriculum to sports-mad pupils from Thornhill School, Sunderland.



# UP AND UNDER

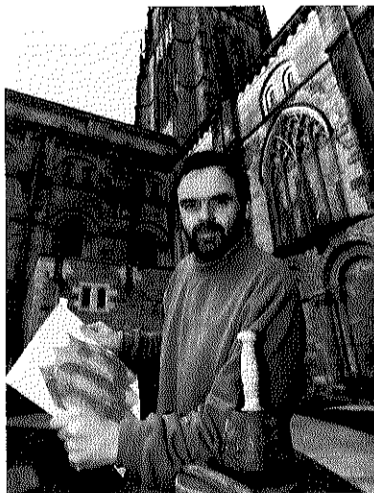
School pupils will have a valid excuse for getting involved in scrums in the classroom from now on - it's all part of the timetable.

For the University has teamed up with the Rugby Football Union to produce a unique teaching pack offering exciting new ways of teaching the National Curriculum using the popular sport as a starting point. Secondary school pupils will study pitch drainage problems in geography, human movement in sciences, and pitch measurements and game percentages for Mathematics.

The teaching pack also includes applications for English and languages, Art and Design, Music, and Religious Education. It is the brainchild of Tony Butlin, Principal Lecturer in the School of Health Sciences and senior Rugby Union coach.

He said: "I have been involved with Rugby Union all my life and have put my enthusiasm for the game into this project.

"Rugby Union offers a novel way of approaching the National Curriculum's foundation subjects and I hope children will develop an interest in the sport as a result of their learning experience."



## Richard Rocks the Cathedral

New Durham Cathedral Artist-in-Residence Richard Cole marked the start of his year with an exhibition at the University's Reg Vardy Gallery.

In "Making Art Public" sculptor Richard demonstrated how he produces his work from drawings, photographs and maquettes through to full-scale finished sculptures.

The exhibition also gave an insight into how he will approach the residency in the run-up to the Cathedral's 900th anniversary celebrations.

**Off to a good start:** Sculptor Richard Cole seeks inspiration for his first work as new Artist-in-Residence at Durham Cathedral.