‘Winter Wonderland’ at the Veterinary School

The annual Dean’s Cocktail Party was held on Friday 22nd November 2013 with over 300 Veterinary School students attending. This year the theme was ‘Winter Wonderland’ with decorations including a 14 foot Christmas Tree, snowflakes and a wintery scene. Cocktails such as Santa-tini, Apple Spice and Snowball Surprise were served by staff with students all receiving an engraved glass as a memento of the evening. Students enjoyed the music from the four piece band ‘Formosa’ who played a mixture of old and new songs throughout the night. The Dean’s Cocktail Party is always a night that students talk about and remember for years to come, with students commenting that this years’ party was ‘the best one yet!’

Top-rated courses at The University of Nottingham

The School of Veterinary Medicine and Science has topped the subject table in The Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide 2014.

Professor Gary England, Founding Dean of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, said: “We are exceptionally pleased to be recognised as the best place to study veterinary medicine in the UK in The Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide 2014. This follows hot on the heels of success in the National Student Survey, where we gained outstanding ratings, coming top again for the third successive year. Our students, staff and Clinical Associates are to be congratulated on making Nottingham undoubtedly a great place to study veterinary medicine.”

The annual NSS asks students from every higher education provider in the UK to rate their educational experience across 22 question areas. More information about the survey can be found at: www.thestudentsurvey.com

This means that Nottingham is top for both teaching and research power in the UK, having been placed top in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise.

Admissions 2014

This year we have received around 2,000 applications for our undergraduate courses. We have now sent out the majority of interview invites, with a smaller number to follow early in the New Year. We will be interviewing 420 applicants across 5 days in January and February and intend to make around 160 offers across our 3 courses.
Graduate Jobs: top 12 degree subjects for getting a job

Treated as a separate subject from medicine and dentistry by HESA this year, veterinary science still holds its own in the employment stakes, with 91.9 per cent in either work or study six months after graduation.

In fact, purely in terms of employment it ranks second, with 85 per cent of graduates finding work immediately in the UK, and another 3 per cent finding employment overseas.

For the full article see http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/universityeducation/10146038/Graduate-jobs-top-12-degree-subjects-for-getting-a-job.html

According to Unistats data (http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/)

Nottingham Veterinary graduates receive the highest salaries of new UK veterinary graduates in their first jobs at £27,000, with 100% employment after 6 months.

Ceremonial cavalry horses help research into lameness

A study of lameness among the ceremonial cavalry horses of the British Army may ultimately benefit a much less celebrated equine population — the pleasure horse.

Third year student Jessica Putnam documented incidents of lameness amongst the 294 horses belonging to the British Army’s Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment (HCMR). Her research carried out in collaboration with Major Laura Holmes, the regimental veterinary officer, has just been published in the Equine Veterinary Journal.

Her supervisor Dr Sarah Freeman, an expert in veterinary surgery at the Vet School, said: “These ceremonial horses reveal a lot about what horses in yards around the world have to contend with. The main message from this study is that horses in work often have minor and short-lived problems. Current literature is focused on the more major and poor prognosis conditions, which is understandable because they have the big impact, but we should recognise that they aren’t necessarily the most common, and we should not ignore the common minor conditions.”

Jessica’s research revealed that the incidence of lameness among this group was low, with a monthly rate of slightly more than two per cent. But what surprised and particularly interested the team was that the most common cause of lameness was cellulitis, a bacterial infection of the connective tissue of the skin.

Dr Freeman said: “We thought arthritis would easily be the most common cause of lameness but early on in the study one of the staff told Jessica that wounds and cellulitis were more of a problem as they were unexpected and put the horses off work. There were a total of 16 cases of cellulitis reported in the study, most attributed to small cuts and each putting the horse out of work for an average of 17 and a half days. Skin wounds were the second most common cause of lameness, accounting for 14 incidents and leading to an average of just over 25 missed working days.”

After talking to horse owners on the yard at the Vet School, where students keep their own horses, the research team discovered that a similar percentage of horses had to be taken out of work through minor nicks or swellings.
Foot and shoeing problems were the third most common cause of lameness in the study group, followed by tendon/ligament injury, arthritis, foot abscesses and muscle bruising.

For more information go to: Incidence, causes and outcomes of lameness cases in a working military horse population: a field study (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23662972)

Wildlife disease detectives meet to discuss results

Rabies, bird flu and Bovine TB — these are just three diseases on the long list of pathogens which pose a threat to animal and human health. A majority of animal and/or human diseases that have appeared in recent decades originate from wildlife. Deer, wild boar, rodents and hares are among the species listed by a specialist team for investigation of a range of diseases.

The WildTech project has been established specifically to address the increasing prevalence of new and emerging wildlife diseases that have clear implications for livestock and human health across the globe.

This international project led by experts at the School reported its findings at a special project dissemination workshop held in September.

The €6m project has been funded by the EU under the 7th Framework Programme. It has brought together a worldwide network of wildlife specialists, and is now in its final stages. It and held two sponsored sessions at the Global Risk Forum One Health Summit in Davos, Switzerland in November.

The project, established in 2009, has:
- Developed new technology which will enable screening of individual wildlife samples for multiple infectious agents.
- Carried out epidemiological analysis of historical and new field data to assess the incidence, prevalence and geographic distribution of current wildlife diseases to determine the potential risk for the emergence of new diseases.
- Developed an online resource for comprehensive and accessible information on wildlife diseases.
- Established a bioinformatics centre for probe design, probe database and online data analysis.
- Established a network of specialists in diagnostic technology, bioinformatics and wildlife health for emerging diseases of wildlife in Europe with links across the world.

The aim of WildTech is to prevent and/or limit disease spread between wild animals as well as to farm livestock and humans. WildTech has worked closely with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and government bodies to develop tools which can be used in an effective pan-European surveillance system with the clear potential for impact at a global level.

Historically, many of the European states have carried out sampling and analyses of samples from wildlife in order to determine the occurrence of particular diseases or as a part of their general surveillance of infectious diseases in animals including farm livestock. Although some of these diagnostic tests were carried out to the standards required for OIE reference laboratories (standard operating procedures and tests), many of them were not and often, work was restricted within community boundaries. Hence it was very difficult to monitor disease spread across the EU and beyond.
There was therefore, an urgent need to design a sampling and testing system that was robust and could serve both as a pan-European diagnostic aid and as the basis for disease mapping and control. This is the function of WildTech.

Professor Duncan Hannant, an expert in applied immunology and the project co-ordinator, said: “This project has placed the EU at the centre of wildlife disease surveillance. We need to be aware of every potential threat and with the help of new diagnostic technology which we have developed we are now better prepared to deal with the changing distribution of new and existing wildlife diseases which could pose a real danger to humans. The key to this project’s success has been the development and application of new techniques for rapid and accurate diagnosis of infectious diseases in wildlife and other animals.”

WildTech has 13 international Partners and approximately 37 associate and collaborative Partners from across Europe and beyond, who are closely integrated in to the project. Collaborative links with USA, Russia and the far-East are important components of the programme.

The WildTech team recently attended the 2nd GRF One Health Summit in Davos, Switzerland. The talks focused on the excellent research conducted at the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science and at our other European collaborators institutions. Areas of research include the development of molecular and serological technologies for the detection of existing and emerging agents in wild animal populations and evaluation of patterns of disease spread across Europe.

For more information go to: www.wildtechproject.com

Please also take a look at the video links below which summarise the achievements of WildTech:
http://vimeo.com/79664112
http://vimeo.com/79663453

Prof Duncan Hannant
Professor of Applied Immunology

Parkinson’s study receives funding from The Michael J. Fox Foundation

Dr Lisa Chakrabarti from the School, will receive $75,000 for a one-year research project from The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research (MJFF), which is dedicated to finding a cure for Parkinson’s and funds promising research that could result in new treatments to slow, stop or reverse the progression of the disease.

Dr Chakrabarti said: “We are trying to look at mitochondrial biology from a totally different perspective, which could have important implications for Parkinson’s and other neurodegenerative diseases. The funding from The Michael J. Fox Foundation will help us to confirm whether some of the protein changes we see in Parkinson’s are related to disease course.”

Parkinson’s disease is a progressive neurological condition that causes degeneration of nerve cells in the brain. It is the loss of a vital chemical messenger found within these cells, called dopamine, which causes the symptoms associated with Parkinson’s including tremor, rigidity, slowness of movement and problems with balance. Other symptoms can include cognitive impairment and mood disorders, a loss of sense of smell, constipation and speech problems.

The disease affects one person in every 500 — around 127,000 people in the UK — most of whom are age 50 or over. There is currently no cure and scientists have yet to pinpoint exactly what causes the condition.

Dr Chakrabarti’s work centres on mitochondria — the energy generating powerhouses found within cells in the human body — and how the mitochondria in the brain’s nerve cells (neurons) are altered in the neurodegeneration of Parkinson’s patients.

Recently her group has found a protein located in mitochondria that could affect the way these cellular structures handle oxygen. Oxygen is one requirement for mitochondrial activity as they use it to make chemical energy called ATP (Adenosine Triphosphate), which powers all the body’s functions.

“To cure Parkinson’s we need to learn more about the pathology of the disease. Dr Chakrabarti’s work will educate the field on disease-specific cellular changes, which could inform future therapeutic development,” said Dr Catherine Kopil, associate director of research programs at MJFF.

The funding from MJFF will allow Dr Chakrabarti to run a larger study to further investigate this potential link by comparing the
post mortem brains of both Parkinson's patients and people without the condition.

Sourcing brains from both the Nottingham Biobank and from other national brain banks, Dr Chakrabarti will examine tissue from patients with differing age at mortality and disease duration to get a clearer understanding of the physiological changes that take place within the brain as the disease progresses.

The Michael J Fox Foundation was established in 2000 by the film and TV actor Michael J. Fox, who was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease in 1991 at age 30.

To date, the Foundation has invested more than $350 million into Parkinson’s research. In addition to funding research projects, MJFF has dedicated significant resources to creating, characterizing and distributing research tools such as pre-clinical models and reagents to be shared with the research community.

The Foundation also fosters clinical research participation through the study matching tool Fox Trial Finder and outreach efforts and sponsors the landmark Parkinson’s Progression Markers Initiative to identify and validate Parkinson’s biomarkers. More details are available at www.michaeljfox.org

Dr Lisa Chakrabarti
Lecturer in Biochemistry

Getting to the Heart of the Matter: An Investigation into Cardiovascular Disease in Captive Great Apes

Cardiovascular (heart) disease is well documented as a cause of death among captive great apes with mortality rates of up to 52% being quoted in the literature. Despite this, our understanding of the aetiology, epidemiology and pathophysiology of the condition remains unclear.

As in man, heart disease in chimpanzees and gorillas has been associated with unexpected or sudden death occurring more commonly in males than females. Post-mortem examination of these animals frequently reveals the presence of myocardial fibrosis; a commonly encountered feature of human heart disease that occurs as the result of hormonal activation and haemodynamic stimulation.

Research into great ape heart disease is gathering in momentum, particularly in America as part of the Great Ape Heart Project (see greatapeheartproject.org) and in the field of cardiac screening/diagnostics (the International Primate Health Project). Vicky Strong, a doctoral student in Veterinary Medicine at the School and Twycross Zoo, is leading the first co-ordinated Europe-wide investigation into great ape cardiovascular disease epidemiology and pathophysiology.

The study is being supervised by Prof Malcolm Cobb, Kate White and Sharon Redrobe (Twycross Zoo) and, under the auspices of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA), will focus on the European captive great population of chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans and bonobos.

For more information visit http://www.twycrosszoo.org/ap e-heart-project.aspx or email ntvjx@nottingham.ac.uk

Vicky Strong
DVM student

Centre for Applied Bioethics News

The Centre for Applied Bioethics and the Veterinary School are very pleased to announce the recent appointment of Vanessa Ashall as Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellow in Ethics and Society.

Vanessa is a Veterinary Surgeon with experience of mixed clinical practice, Named Veterinary Surgeon in research and veterinary blood banking. Vanessa holds professional and academic postgraduate qualifications in ethics and law and has recently published in the field of animal research ethics. The Wellcome Trust's vision is ‘to achieve extraordinary improvements in human and animal health, through supporting the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities’. The award will allow Vanessa to research how the UK veterinary profession should manage the social and ethical implications of the clinical use of donated companion animal blood and tissue.

The Centre for Applied Bioethics and the Veterinary School will be hosting the Animal Welfare Science, Ethics and Law Veterinary Association
(AWSELVA) Conference at Sutton Bonington in March 2014. The conference theme is Animal Futures: Perspectives from Ethics, Law and Social Science. Details of confirmed speakers and registration information will be available soon.

Dr Kate Millar
Director of Centre for Applied Bioethics

Poster presentations at the International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM) Congress 2013

In June this year, following our third year projects on feline shelter medicine with Dr Rachel Dean and Dr Jenny Stavisky, we attended and presented posters at the ISFM Congress held in Barcelona. The Congress was held over 5 days and included lectures by companies such as Hill’s and Bayer, as well as by experts in the fields of feline paediatrics, behaviour and infectious disease.

In the breaks between lectures, there were allocated poster sessions during which we presented our work to delegates from all over the world. As the only veterinary students presenting, it was a great learning experience, albeit a little daunting! It was brilliant that so many people were interested in our findings and that our topics were relevant to many veterinary professionals.

The Congress was not all about lectures though, as ISFM held an Art Nouveau themed party for all the delegates at one of the best hotels in Barcelona. The free bar and music made for a good night! It was a great opportunity for us to meet lots of new people in a relaxed atmosphere and served as a fitting end to a fantastic week. Also, we used our free time to explore one of the most iconic cities in Europe, especially landmarks such as La Sagrada Familia and Park Güell.

Thanks go to the Nottingham Enrichment Fund for providing funding towards this amazing experience, which has reinforced our shared interest in feline medicine.

Rebecca Fallman and Michael Molloy
Year 4 students

NC3RS conference 2013

On 19th June, I went to the annual symposium of the National centre for the Replacement, Refinement & Reduction of animals in research in London to enter the poster competition. I presented a poster from my 3rd year research project upon ovine footrot. This was more specifically titled the development of an ex vivo organ culture (EVOC) model of the ovine skin/hoof interface using post slaughter material which can be used to research ovine footrot.

My undergraduate poster was surrounded by those from PhD students and was the only one based upon veterinary species. The day consisted of a series of lectures broken up by poster viewing and a very good lunch! The lectures all aimed at different methods of reducing the number of animals in research or to improve the efficiency of the system. Methods of replacing animals in research ranged from use of zebra fish larvae to mathematical modelling and using slime moulds and/or coconut to cure epilepsy! Simpler methods included reducing the number of animals by improving the efficiency of breeding laboratory mice.

During poster viewing I was questioned by interested people upon my research. Most people were intrigued upon the research topic of sheep which made a change from the rest of the human based posters. I later got examined by a conference staff member who was more interested in the relevance and application of the project to wider research and into the future. Following the end of the lectures, I was awarded a surprised runner up place in the poster competition.

Kate Sessford
Year 4 student
AVTWR/BSAS Johnes presentation

I was fortunate to gain the student prize to present my third year research project at AVTWR (Association for Veterinary Teaching and Research). It was a great experience and an opportunity to present my work in a really friendly environment.

My project was entitled; a study of survival times for cattle from 12 UK dairy herds that have been tested for mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis. It was fantastic to be able to show and discuss my work other academics and vets in the field; and to hear their comments on my research and Johnes in general. People were very interested in the extent of the production loss and changes in survival time that I had been able to show in my research. This project highlighted to me how important herd level management and early disease detection is for the farming industry; and how vets play an integral role in this.

Alice Horne
Year 3 student

BVZS Poster, anaesthesia of Potamochoerus porcus (Red River Hog)

At every BVZS (British Veterinary Zoological Society) meeting there is the opportunity for students to present research work and cases that they have seen out on placement. There are 4 categories for poster prize submission. My poster detailed a novel anaesthetic using Zoletil (tiletamine/zolazepam) for Red River Hog’s toe amputation.

I was delighted to be awarded the student prize for my work, and I have just enjoyed my sponsorship to the November meeting that was in Luton.

Alice presenting her poster

If you are interested in zoological work then this is a great opportunity to meet new people, develop your knowledge and importantly get your face known in the zoological world!

Alice Horne
Year 3 student

Connect Bursary Awards

Emma Peal and Rebecca Davenport were both recipients of the MSD Animal Health Connect Bursary 2012, each receiving £1,000 funding from the company to carry out research projects on their topic of interest. Rebecca continued work based on her year 3 research project, investigating the immune response to footrot in sheep and Emma’s project aimed to determine if obesity affects the immune response of donkeys to vaccination against equine influenza. As part of the Bursary, each had to present their work at MSD Animal Health, Milton Keynes.

In front of members of the company, fellow recipients and with the support of their supervisors, Dr Janet Daly and

Outreach Activity

Dr David Gardner successfully applied for funding from the Physiological Society to run a ‘hands-on’ physiology session in the Rob Clarke teaching Laboratory with secondary school pupils from Arnold Hill Academy, Nottingham. On October 17th around 20-30 year 11-12 pupils assessed their VO2max, measured nerve activity in contracting muscles in their legs and had an open discussion about the relative merits of animal research in the UK.

Students who received a Bursary

David was joined by Drs Carl Stevenson, John Harris, Simon Welham (School of Biosciences), Craig Bullock and Dr Louise Dunford. Mr Leigh Silvester helped set up the experiments and made the whole day run smoothly. Of interest, a former undergraduate student at SB and postgraduate student at the School, Dr Phil Rhodes, was one of the Arnold Hill Academy teachers coming along with the pupils.

Dr David Gardner, Associate Professor in Developmental Physiology
Dr Sabine Tötemeyer, each spoke for 20 minutes on their research results followed by a question and answer session.

The day culminated in a tour of the MSD research site. It was a great opportunity to see work carried out by fellow students at other vet schools, gain a greater understanding as to the work MSD carries out and has been a fantastic experience for both students to gain a real insight into the world of research.

Rebecca Davenport
Year 5 student

New Staff

The School welcomes the following staff who have joined us since our Spring Newsletter:

- Dr Simon Archer, Research Fellow
- Vanessa Ashall, Welcome Trust Senior Research Fellow
- Dr Nick Bexfield, Clinical Associate Professor
- Steve Brogden, Clinical Lecturer
- Jessica Brown, Apprentice Administrator
- Dr Geoffrey Coran-Lormier, Research Fellow
- Sarah Cripps, Teaching Associate
- Dr Peers Davies, Clinical Lecturer
- Guillermo Fernandez Castillo, Teaching Associate
- Solenne Gauvin, Research Technician
- Laurence Hall, Research Technician
- Dr Heidi Janicke, Lecturer
- Dr Fiona Lovatt, Clinical Associate Professor
- Tim Pank, Postgraduate Administrator
- Dr Natalie Robinson, Research Fellow
- Joanne Sanders, Teaching Technician
- Dr Jenny Stavisky, Clinical Lecturer
- Benn Waterfield, Teaching Technician
- Andrew Wang, Research Fellow
- Catherine Williams, Research Technician

We also congratulate the following staff on receiving promotions:

- Dr Richard Emes (Reader)
- Dr Neil Foster (Associate Professor)
- Prof Jon Huxley (Professor)
- Dr Mike Jones (Associate Professor)
- Dr Richard Lea (Reader)
- Ms Jes Squire (Teaching Technician TS3)

In addition David Wilkinson, formerly Apprentice Technician, is now Teaching Technician, and Erica Gummery, formerly Senior Teaching Technician has now become a University Teacher.

Veterinary Team Leadership and Professionalism Course

The VLTP course is a fantastic opportunity for vet students and we would recommend it to anyone. At first, we were both sceptical as to how useful the course would be and hoped that it would bridge the gap between the theoretical content of the Personal and Professional Skills module and its relevance in the real world.

It was a residential course that spanned over three very packed days. The location was fantastic and there were a mix of vets, vet students and veterinary bioscientists attending. The course was centred around “finding your best self” in order to be able to work effectively, both as an individual and in a team environment.

We were given a few short presentations on concepts such as “paradigm shifts” and “self-belief”. As well as this, we undertook a Myers Brigg assessment, the results of which giving us an understanding of different personality types which became very clear when we started to do team challenges and tasks.

Our favourite task was the “team building skis” exercise. We were put into two teams of three (one team of introverts and one of extroverts), and given the task of using wooden skis with ropes as handles to get from one line to another over the distance of ten meters or so. Immediately the extroverts all jumped onto the skis and were all very vocal. Whereas, the introverts all gathered into a group and discussed the equipment they had and the plan they would use to complete the task. From standing back and watching the activity it was clearly visible as to which group was which; this got us thinking about our own types and under which category our behaviours would be places.

The aim of the exercise was to show group dynamics in the work place and how realistically, you will have a mix of all different personality types. This can be both challenging and rewarding if you know how you behave and how others perceive it; you have to unlock the group potential by making allowances in your own behaviour.

The experiential learning that we undertook was demanding but it was rewarding to see how our teams developed over the course of the three days.

We certainly have more confidence in ourselves after
attending this course and the hints and tips we picked up will definitely be helpful, both in the rest of our time as veterinary students and in our chosen profession.

Helen Farmer, Simon Patchett  
Year 2 students

Vets in the Community  
Charity Clinic

A student led project within the School is going from strength to strength. The vet clinic for the pets of homeless and vulnerably housed people in Nottingham was started just over a year ago by Dr Jenny Stavisky in the Centre for Evidence Based Veterinary Medicine with help from the School, Dogs Trust, and the Big Issue office in Nottingham. Since then they have been fortunate to be awarded funding by a Cascade award from the University, which will provide 3 years of running costs. To many people in these situations their pets mean a great deal to them but they often cannot afford to get any veterinary care for their beloved companions and that is where we try to help.

At the clinic we offer a full health check, along with treatment for minor ailments and preventative medicines (vaccinations, flea and worming treatments) and microchipping completely free of charge. The double bonus with this clinic is that whilst helping people in the Community in Nottingham it is also great for veterinary students. As well as the small committee organising the clinic which gives great experience, it also offers an opportunity for students in clinical years to practise their clinical skills. Students coming to the clinic get to do everything from history taking to writing up the notes and everything in between (whilst having a qualified vet on hand). When I went to the clinic I found it really great to put into practice all the things they teach us in Vet School but in a much more relaxed atmosphere than on placement. I think that when I get the chance to run consults for myself I will be a bit more relaxed about it having done a couple already.

With the committee being dedicated to making the project a success the awareness of the clinic has increased through word of mouth and outreach programmes. This has meant the numbers of pets being brought to the clinic is rising and we hope to be able to run a more regular clinic so we can help more animals as well as providing more opportunities for vet students to improve their clinical skills.

A Christmas party held on the 11th December will hopefully prove a massive success where we will be giving out the generous edible donations from staff and students given during Harvest Week to make Christmas a bit special for the animals. As well as staff and student donations, companies have joined in the Christmas spirit by donating treats for pets and owners alike and we are grateful to Novartis, Purina, Subway and Pret A Manger for their kindness.

Vets in the Community charity clinic runs on the last Wednesday of every month it is run and staffed by students in their clinical years.

Philippa Sleeman  
Year 4 student

IVSA Nottingham - Thessaloniki Exchange

Nottingham veterinary students visited Thessaloniki Veterinary School between 6th – 11th November 2013.

Wow. WOW. What an exchange. To be honest, I wish I could leave this report there as words cannot do justice to the incredible time we had but alas, I will try!

We took 12 students over from Nottingham to visit the Vet School of Thessaloniki. Whilst there were several of us from 4th year (desperately making the most of the last 18 months of being a student!), we also had a mix of students from year 1, 2, and 3. We did not all know each other prior to the trip and so it was a great chance to make new friends within our own Vet School as well as with the Greek students.
We took off early in the morning leaving the freezing temperatures and rain behind us to set down in a warm and sunny Thessaloniki. After being greeted at the airport, we were driven to one of the girl’s apartments where we were met with a very warm welcome with the rest of the Greek students and an accompanying Greek feast. After filling our bellies with a multitude of delights we were feeling pretty optimistic we were in for a great time and we were certainly not wrong!

After going and settling into our respective hosts’ houses, we went to a bar where the beer pump was in the middle of the table. A clever ploy to get you to buy ample beer as it quickly escalated into a competition to see who could pour the perfect pint and of course, who could consume the most. Our first evening in Greece and we were already loving it. The Greeks were very easy to talk to and not just about our shared passion for veterinary science.

The following morning we were shown around their Vet School. This was fascinating as it could not have been any more different from our own. Set in the city on a bustling campus, the school was founded in 1950 and occupies a massive old building. It was clear that their teaching methods were all very traditional and it was interesting to see laboratories dedicated to anatomy and histology as our experience is very different at Nottingham. We had the chance to go into their parasitology laboratory where we learned about the important parasites of Greece and compared them to those that pose an issue in the UK. There were a lot of preserved samples of parasites which, although made us lose our appetite for noodles ever again, were good to visualize.

We then went out to their small animal clinics which had a great atmosphere of eager prospective vets and clients with pets milling about. We were welcomed by senior vets who informed us on the history and structure of their veterinary school. We then piled into a consult room to go through the basics of a canine reproductive exam which was useful revision for the older years and a good thing to start practicing for our younger students.

A highlight for us all was the exotic section of the clinic mainly because the vet was less human, more superwoman. A veterinary ophthalmologist, she also specialized in exotics and appeared to know everything there was to know, ever. She casually told us anecdotes of her operations on everything from dolphins to sugar gliders. We had the chance to hold some of the exotic in-patients which included poorly tortoises, hedgehogs, a hawk and a kestrel. It was interesting to hear about the sort of exotic pets kept in Greece and the health conditions most commonly seen.

Following our experience in the clinics we then were driven an hour outside the city to the ancient tombs of Philip II and Alexander which was both a compelling and yet eery experience. With the excavations contained in a dimly lit underground museum it had an enriching atmosphere, enabling our imaginations to run away with us back to 3rd century BC.

The drive out there was also interesting as it meant we got to see a snapshot of the Greek scenery outside the main city of Thessaloniki.

In the evening we trekked to the older part of Thessaloniki to a traditional restaurant to sample a true Greek meze. Oh good heavens, what marvellous food we had. With a variety of wonderful fresh breads, olives, cheeses and Mediterranean vegetables we all gorged...
ourselves stupid. A truly wonderful evening!

Everyday seemed to somehow, miraculously, top the last. Friday saw us go up the iconic White Tower of Thessaloniki to soak up the breathtaking views. We could rotate on the spot and were treated to just about every type of scenery possible. Across the glinting sea we could see Mount Olympus thanks to the gorgeously calm and cloudless day. And yet by turning just slightly either way, you could see the whole of Thessaloniki with mountains towering up behind it and the castle sitting on top, imposing down on the city. We caught a bus up to said castle which was in the same old town area as we had been the night before so it was nice to see it by daylight.

We arrived at the castle to yet more sensational views. When lunch arrived and we ate it by the castle, with 25°C sunshine beating down on us and in the company of our Greek friends, with the possibly the best views in Greece, that was it. We were in heaven. Never has so much food been unnecessarily packed away but it was far too delicious not to give into it. This did mean a post-prandial rest in the sun was required where we Brits tried in vain to sun ourselves like desperate reptiles. We followed this adventure with some shopping back in the city. Had it not been for the strict Ryanair regulations on hand luggage, we may have succumbed to mad consumerism of the amazing shops.

Following a much-needed rest at our host’s houses we headed over to a party at their veterinary faculty. We were not sure what to expect as our own annual Vet School party is a very civilized affair with lecturers handing out cocktails to us. A stark contrast to our own parties for sure; it was midnight by the time we got there and with promises of us staying out until 5/6am, our body clocks were well and truly shot to pieces. However, we had an absolutely amazing time partying with the Greek vet students.

After just a few hours sleep we awoke to yet another beautifully sunny day in the city. Saturday was the day of the city rally and can only be described as immense amounts of fun. We separated into 2 teams and had a variety of challenges to complete. In the process we had fun exploring Thessaloniki with our new Greek friends who were exceptionally patient with us whilst we stopped to marvel at all the sights along the way.

I feel like here would be a good place to make an interjection about Greek bakeries. What amazing places. In fact, it is not really representative of our trip that I have got this far through the report and not mentioned them once yet so I can only apologize for that. You cannot go far in Thessaloniki without stumbling upon a bakery, each somehow more impressive than the last. Along with the traditional Greek food our hosts fed us, these bakeries were definitely to blame for the buttons popping off our jeans by the end of the exchange. An array of beautifully golden baked treats of every variety lined their enticing and pleasing shops.

And whilst the Greek economy is nothing to be pleased about, our poor willpower did enjoy the stupidly cheap prices, allowing us to indulge heavily. I’m sure the Greeks are secretly thinking they now see why England is suffering such an obesity crisis.

Our city rally culminated in what was my personal highlight of the trip. We boarded an old pirate ship from the White Tower and went around the bay as the sun set upon Thessaloniki. A cold beer in hand and surrounded by wonderful company and scenery, the evening could not have been any more perfect.

We had one final night out with our new friends from both Thessaloniki and Nottingham
Vet School. After sleeping just a couple of hours that night we assembled for a concluding breakfast featuring (of course) a choice of both savoury and sweet pastries.

Never has reality been quite so bitter, the post-exchange blues as severe as they were upon touchdown in the UK. Our Greek hosts were the most wonderful and kind-hearted people we could have ever wished for. However, for now we must remember and delight in the fact that the exchange is only 50% complete as February 2014 will see Nottingham giving Thessaloniki students a very warm welcome indeed.

Sarah Baker
Year 4 student

**AVS Congress 2014**

Over the previous years, AVS Congress has continued to increase in popularity, with hundreds of students from all 8 Vet Schools attending the wide range of lectures, seminars and practicals that Congress has to offer. Let’s not forget the legendary Congress black-tie ball which never fails to deliver an evening stuffed to the brim with delicious food, wine, dancing, more wine and perhaps a little more wine to finish.

Needless to say anyone who has attended AVS Congress in recent years will know that this is a fantastic event to meet other vet students, learn more about a range of veterinary organisations and to hear about aspects of the profession that you may not necessarily be taught in the course.

This year’s Congress will be hosted at Nottingham between 24th – 26th January 2014, and it hopes to improve upon Edinburgh’s excellent Congress in 2013.

Feedback from last year made it clear that having the event spread over two days gave students more time to appreciate the variety of lectures and practicals on offer, which is why Nottingham are continuing with this idea. Linking with this it seems that organising the practicals into ‘streams’ meant that students attending Congress could focus more on the areas of veterinary medicine that they prefer, and for this reason Nottingham are organising the event into small, farm, equine and exotic-animal streams.

On the Sunday students will again get the opportunity to listen to the Congress speakers and attend practicals including pregnant-ewe ultrasound, wound-management, equine ophthalmology and reptile/avian practical sessions.

The Saturday is also hosting a careers-fayre, attracting companies from all across the UK which are relevant to veterinary students. This is a fantastic chance to meet potential employers and find out where your degree can take you in the future, whether that be general practice, internships, drug-companies or more!!

During the event all students have the chance to attend the AVS annual general meeting. This is an excellent way for the committee to inform its members what it has been doing over the past 12 months, and what it hopes to do in the future. This is also time for the presidential hand-over and AVS members can elect a new executive committee.

AVS Congress 2014 is shaping up to be a great event jam-packed with practicals, speakers, bars, friends and of course the ball! All us here at Nottingham can’t wait to show the other Vet Schools exactly what they are missing....

Will Bayton
Year 4 student and Senior AVS Nottingham Representative
Staff/Student Swimming Gala

In the annual staff/postgrads/post docs/staff children vs undergraduate swimming gala, the glory goes to the Undergrad team this year.

Despite the freezing December temperatures everyone ventured to the pool to take part in races such as the PPE drown, the 2 pence dive mayhem, the float huddle (see photograph), the mega relay and of course some 'sensible' races. There was a lot of cheering, splashing and high spirited competition. Next year we will be gathering an official staff cheerleading team (there was a direction correlation between cheering and race wins).

Each year we look forward to our 'kids' team (we had 10 staff kids this year) getting older and even more accomplished. We can also see if anyone can beat the Dean with his award winning 50m underwater swim!

Many thanks to everyone who took part and the staff would especially like to thank student team Captain Alex Bowman for providing another fine student team and expertly baked cake.

Students and the Dean celebrating

We look forward to the next few events in the New Year that make up our Vet School Sporting competitions, which end on our May Sports Day BBQ and final activities day.

Dr Catrin Rutland
Lecturer of Anatomy and Development Genetics

Staff vs. Student Sports 2013/14

For the 2013/14 Sports season, to avoid the congestion of a Sports Weekend, Dr David Gardner, School Sports Captain, has organised for sports to be held on a monthly basis, starting with the December Swimming Gala. The following sports are on the fixture list for 2014, culminating in our May Sports Day and BBQ:

- Pub Games
- Badminton
- Table tennis
- Snooker
- Tennis
- Football
- Croquet
- School Sports
- Clay Pigeon shooting