

# UK PRISONS CHIEF ONCE AGAIN SLAMS IMMIGRATION CENTRE FOR FAILING TO PROTECT AND TREAT DETAINEES

THE chief of prisons has again found faults with standards at immigration holding centres near Heathrow, *reports Aidan Jones.*

Anne Owers, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP), said detainees spent too long locked in single rooms in the short-term holding facility at the Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre (IRC), on the Bath Road.

The holding rooms are meant for immigrants who are about to be deported, and should not be used for longer than 24 hours.

They are separate to the full removal centre. Owers's study found that immigrants facing deportation were not given adequate advice and staff did not have information about previous stints the detainees may have spent in custody.

Over a third of detainees also said they felt unsafe.

Owers, who has been critical of conditions inside the UK's detention estate on several occasions, said: "We're pleased to see that the Immigration and Nationality Directorate has responded to some of our concerns. However, accommodation remains inadequate and the needs of detainees are not yet sufficiently met."

Home Office Minister Liam Byrne said he would act on Owers's findings. "HMCIP noted that at Colnbrook short-term holding facility detainees had access to healthcare facilities and checks," Byrne added.

Owers visited Colnbrook and a number of other short-term holding facilities in May 2006.

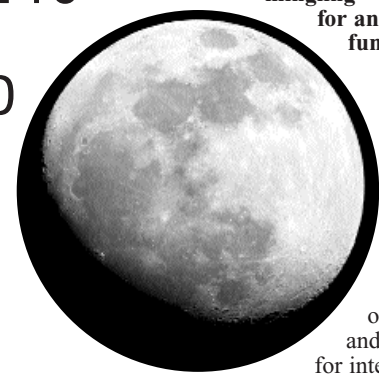
**THE WINDRUSH WOMEN**  
THE CHANGING FACE OF LONDON AND ITS IMMIGRANTS SEE PAGES 16&17

# WEIRD SCIENCE

**BIG STARS IN THEIR EYES:** The Science Museum's Dana Centre is a great place to eat, drink and talk science. Inset below, science expert and author Brian Clegg



THE CHANCE TO TRAVEL TO INFINITY AND BEYOND AT THE DANA CENTRE INTRIGUED CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN, BUT HE DISCOVERED THAT EATING, DRINKING AND TALKING TO STRANGERS WAS EVEN MORE FUN



**A CROWDED Kensington bar, full of young people mingling – it hardly seems like the venue for an intense debate about the fundamentals of the universe.**

That was before I found the Science Museum's Dana Centre.

Now in its third year, the 'adults only' section of the Science Museum at 165 Queensgate, Kensington, is sexing-up science to attract the after-work 18-40 crowd.

Three times a week, 40 weeks of the year, all corners of science, medicine, technology and the environment are the focus for interactive debate with the field's leading experts.

Tonight's subject is the universe, and the chit chatting 90-plus crowd is invited to sit down by the event co-ordinator.

The four experts are introduced and people instinctively sink into their chairs for a relaxing lecture. But relaxing isn't on the agenda tonight.

Unlike talks at the Royal Institute, for example, speakers here don't preach from the pulpit, but jump straight into the crowd to get maximum time with their guests.

This is part of what Dana programmes manager Kat Nilsson calls an 'interactive, informative and informal' approach to attract people without any background in science.

Chairs then shuffle around and five circles of about 20 guests each take shape in front of the bar. After a brief introduction, the speakers take their seats among the groups.

First up in my circle is Brian Cox, a leading researcher of high energy physics from the University of Manchester, casually nursing a bottle of beer.

We huddle around the fresh-faced physicist, straining to hear his supposedly 'light-weight' introduction about the £4 billion particle accelerator he is working with for the Atlas project in Geneva.

Carefully listening to how the latest machinery can cause photons to collide at a speed and temperature so high that it can re-create the conditions in the universe less than a billionth of a second after the Big Bang, is fascinating, but it needs much more clarification.

The aim of the group discussion approach is to do just that.

The intimate setting tries to provides the time and atmosphere for some unabashed questioning.

However, after recapping on concepts of such magnitude in just 12 minutes, very little, or no time at all, is left for the questions that would justify the

format. Also problematic is the number of people trying to squeeze into the conversation.

The end result, as Cox walks away from us, is a mixture of smiles and furrowed brows, presumably depending on how much homework each had done beforehand.

Turning to my neighbour, writer Hermione Barnett, 30, of Comeragh Road, West Kensington, I ask how she is coping. She says: "The talk is pitched above my level of knowledge, but I'm enjoying finding out what little I am.

"I came along because it sounded cool and I wanted to know more about quantum physics." Which is then explained, in as little and as much detail as the previous intergalactic sound bite, by the next speaker who joins us, Brian Clegg, author of the bestselling book, *Infinity*.

Running through the basics of quantum entanglement, the mind truly does boggle.

But yet again, time is too scarce and the expert escapes before truly imparting to us the essence of his knowledge.

After two more sessions, on dark matter and telescopes, formalities are over and it's time to hit the bar.

There is a buzz as strangers talk to each other, while some huddle round the speakers to get the explanations that weren't clear to them earlier. Kat Nilsson joins me again and says: "The new season has been so popular we've had a problem with numbers.

"Ideally we want to keep the crowd down to about 60, but since the events are free, we usually overbook to compensate for the people that drop out. Then when people turn up at the door, it can get very tricky."

They had better resolve the problem soon, as it seems the popularity is not on the wane. Tongues are already wagging about the night of February 28, when all communication for the evening will be done through texting.

Why? Because guests will be able to ask any question they like about sex, totally anonymously. You just send the message, and it flashes across a big screen at the end of the room.

Within seconds, in-house and external experts are on call to flash back up the answers on the screen for all to see.

The entire 'textalogue', as Nilsson calls it, will also be available on the science museum website – hopefully with a cybernanny at hand.

Sexy science may be a stretch, but if you are looking for an alternative evening to socialise and develop rather than burn brain cells, the Dana centre is the perfect place to start.

● For details on Dana Centre nights, see January's listings on the right.

**'I CAME ALONG BECAUSE IT SOUNDED COOL AND I WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT QUANTUM PHYSICS'**



## NEW SEASON OF NIGHTS AT DANA CENTRE:

TUESDAY JANUARY 23 (7-8.30PM)

**Hypnosis intrigues us. It can generate strange and fascinating experiences, but at the same time we fear we might lose control. Are our beliefs justified? Psychologist Peter Naish will reveal some of the mysteries of this state of consciousness.**

DINNER@DANA: UNDER PRESSURE! WEDNESDAY JANUARY 24 (6.30-9PM)

**A small amount of stress is essential for day-to-day living, but prolonged and exaggerated periods can lead to extreme health and emotional problems. Under Pressure! looks at stress in modern day life with a representative from the Health & Emotion Research Group at Anglia Ruskin University. This event has been organised by Café Scientifique and is £13 including dinner, a drink and discussion.**

METEOROLOGICAL MAGIC THURSDAY JANUARY 25 (7-8.30PM)

**Quintessentially English weather – be it freezing fog, gale-force winds or drizzling rain – never ceases to be a talking point across the country. Meteorological Magic explores the science of prediction, how forecasts are made and what climate patterns hold in store.**

TOMORROW'S SCIENCE TUESDAY JANUARY 30 (7-8.30PM)

**Futurologists are scanning the horizon for scientific risks and technological revolutions, but what do they think will affect our lives in the coming years?**

DRUGS FUTURES WEDNESDAY JANUARY 31 (6.30-9.30PM)

**Will our attitudes to drugs change? Will children be popping 'smart pills' before exams? What kind of drug use will society accept? The event will give the public the rare opportunity to feed directly into policy-making, including aspirations and concerns about current and future issues related to brain science, addiction and drugs**

● Dana Centre events are open to anyone aged 18 and over. Most events are free, but places should be pre-booked by calling 020 7942 4040 or e-mailing: tickets@danacentre.org.uk