

The Diary



Martin Dawes
checks out
martin.dawes@sh

Writing's on the wall for image and celebrity

If you've ever written a fan letter to a star requesting a signed photograph you'll know just how artist David Garratt felt. But only a little.

He sent off polite letters, all different, including his own signed photo in return, to 1,000 British celebrities.

Are there really that many? "Mmm, when I got to 600 I started scraping the barrel with WAGs and Big Brother

contestants," he confesses at Sheffield's Persistence Works on Brown Street, which is staging his first solo exhibition from today.

So far he's got back 300, all now up on the wall. He told TV chef Antony Worrall Thompson he looked like his dentist. Wozzer sent back a cookbook. "It might deter you from eating anything that might rot your teeth," he wrote.

David, aged 24, who has a studio at the gallery, also wrote to Terry Wogan. "I got a jiffy bag with a jumper in. No letter or photo."

The Wake up to Wogan jumper has a special display case of its own.

"I wore it when writing a lot of the letters," grins David. The project which took all of last year (and cost him £240 in second class postage alone) was to see how celebrities tended their own fame.

"Ninety per cent of BBC news people fold their arms," he says pointing to pictures of Jeremy Paxman, John Humphrys and Natasha Kaplinsky all doing it. ITN's Sir Trevor McDonald does not.

Actor Brian Blessed sent a photo and David's letter back to him, annotated in big writing. "Eat yeast," he wrote in answer to his inquiry on how to grow a beard.

Tony Blair sent a nice signed photo as PM. Dour Gordon Brown doesn't do photos from Number 10.

The higher they were the sniffer they got. J K Rowling, Sir Cliff Richard ("out of the country for most of 2007") and Germaine Greer ("At the recommendation of the local police Professor Greer no longer provides autographs by post") all gave him the bum's rush.

So did the Queen. Her Majesty sent back David's photo and a lady in waiting wrote rather sternly that "she has made it a rule to give this only to people who are known personally to her."



Image is everything: David Garratt with his display at the Persistence Works

Picture: Dean

A sporting challenge



Air on air: Grimethorpe radio ballad

FANS of radio's Sports Report, currently celebrating its 60th anniversary, will have been delighted to hear a full rendition of the famous opening music in last week's programme.

The three minute version was specially recorded for Radio 5 Live by current English brass band champions, our very own

Grimethorpe Colliery Band.

They were the band featured in that very entertaining film *Brassed Off*, which many people think was better than *The Full Monty*.

Ask your mates down the pub tonight if they know the title of the tune.

It's called *Out of the Blue*.

Lib Dem MP Lembit Opik wrote apologetically that he was "short on photos."

Most, like Paul O'Grady, pictured with his dog Buster, Eamon Holmes, Graham Norton and Twiggy, sent colour photos. Boris Johnson's is a classy black and white.

So what's the point of all this?

"As an artist you are very much aware that people perceive themselves in a certain way. This is their

public image they are wanting to convey. It is interesting how they perceive themselves," he says.

The lesser the persona or if they had slipped down the celebrity ladder, the more likely they were to reply.

Rolf Harris was genuinely interested when David told him he could see one of his old paintings on a wall through his studio window.

He's asked for a photo. ■ The free exhibition runs until January 25.